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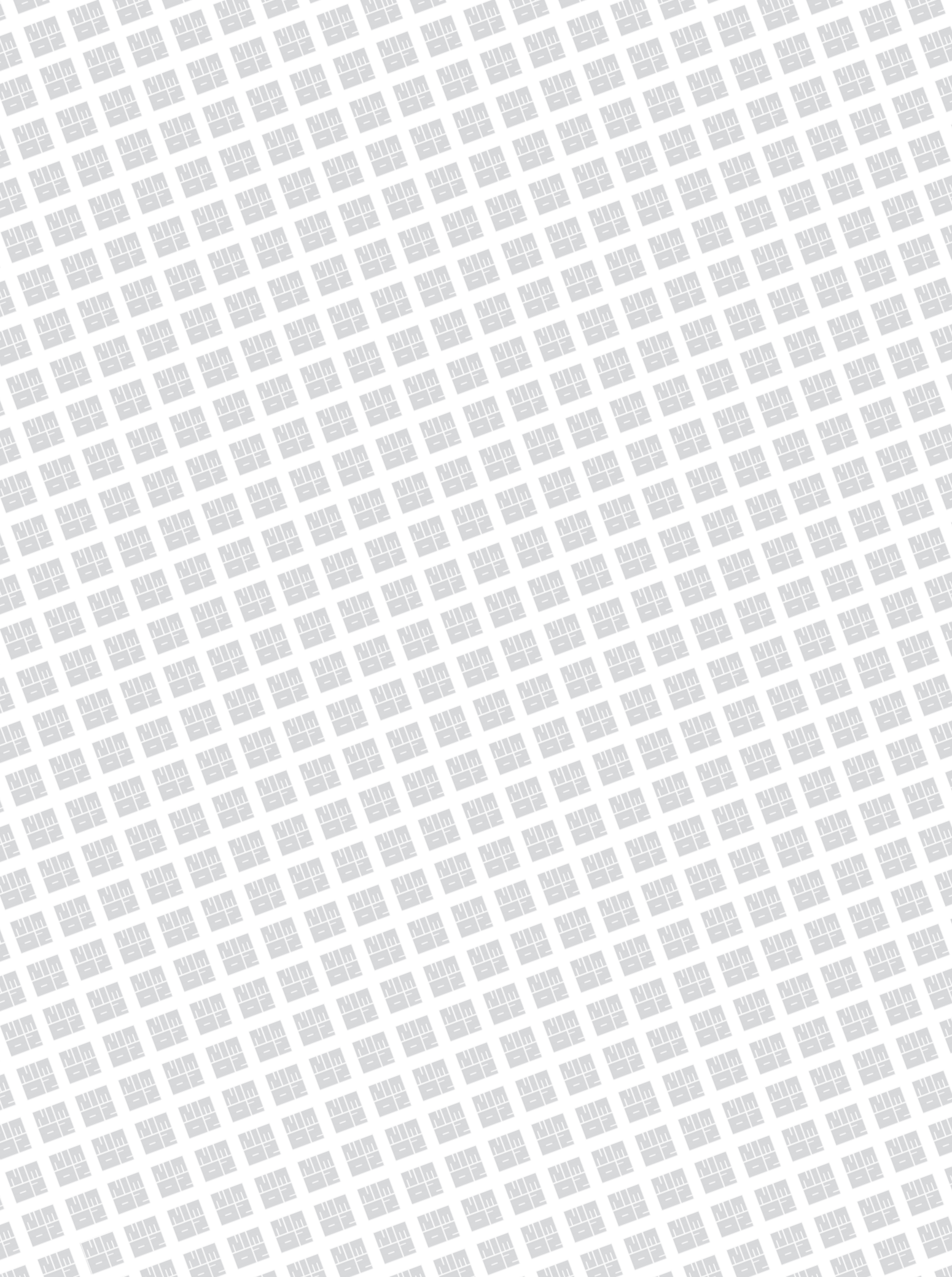
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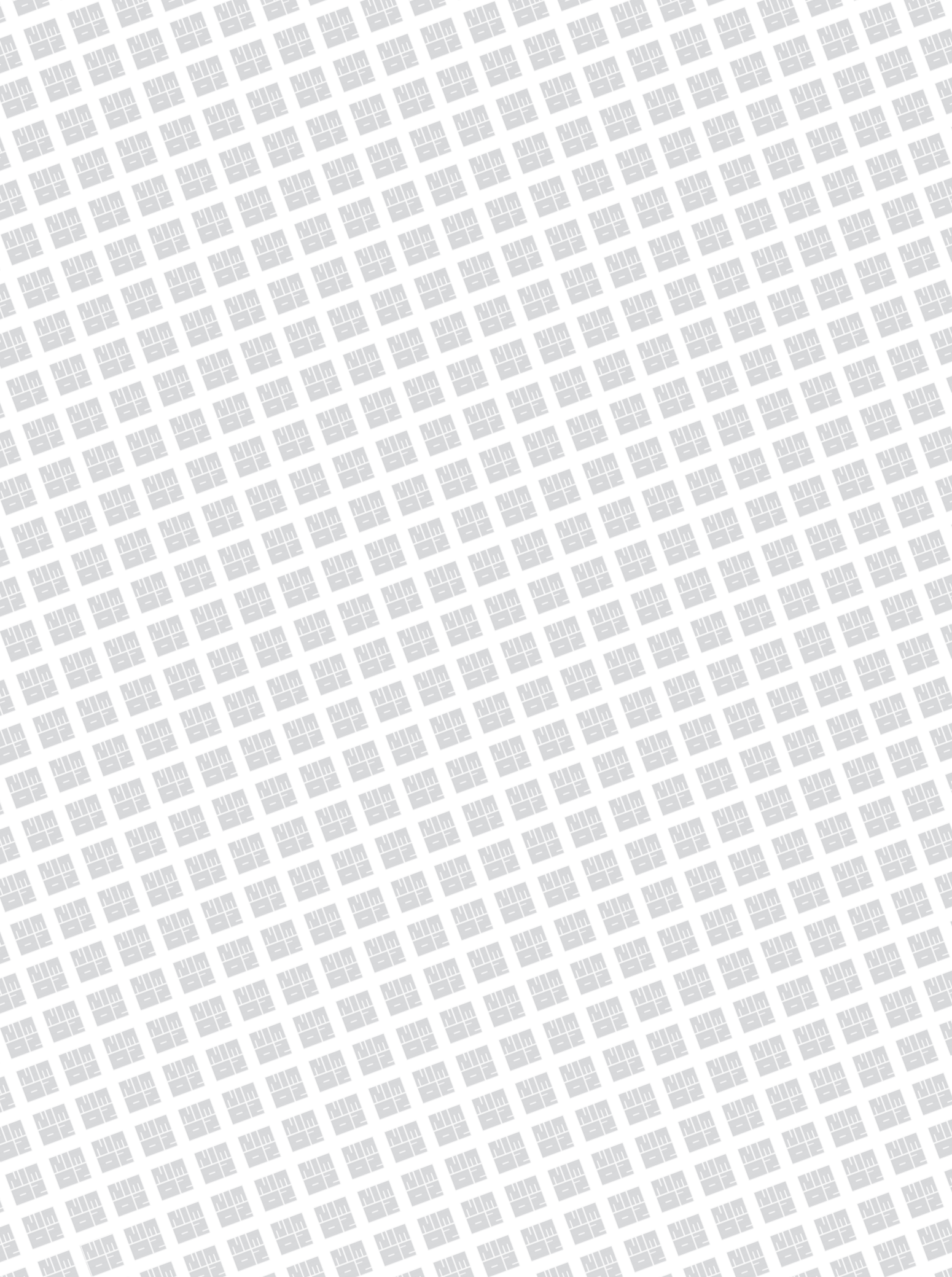
Dear Readers,

The *Museology* journal has been accompanying Polish museums and museum curators for 70 years. Since 2019 it has been translated into English, which has allowed the annual to reach a wider public. We try with strong determination for the topics of the published articles, divided into thematic sections, including museums and their collections, their provenance, digitizing, legal issues, museum management, or museum education, to be interesting to museum curators from different continents. The regular sections of our journal are complemented with the one containing papers related to the events most relevant to museums at the given moment. In the recent years these were respectively: the new museum definition, [61 (2020)], museum's responsibility stemming from it [63 (2022)], and museum operations throughout the difficult time of the pandemic [62 (2021)].

The leading topic of the 2023 issue is museum's identity. We perceive it through placing a museum within its environment, its social role, attitude to current challenges, such as ecology, the economic crisis, the war, not neglecting, however, collection identity defining the character of the display and its educational potential. The inspiration to tackle the topic came, among others, from the new museum definition adopted by the ICOM General Assembly in Prague in August 2022.

When preparing for you a selection of articles from the last three issues of our annual, not only do we want to encourage you to read our journal, but also to intervene in the debates and to submit your papers which will allow to see the discussed issues from a different perspective, no doubt also extending the range of the analysed topics.

Museology Editorial Team



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MUSEUM DIVERSITY THROUGH THE LENS OF THE KYOTO DEFINITION

François Mairesse

Université Sorbonne-Nouvelle, Paris

The process of elaborating for the eighth time in ICOM history a new museum definition was launched in 2016 at the General Conference in Milan.¹ A standing committee was then formed in order to follow the process, appointed by the President of ICOM Suay Aksoy. This committee, entitled *Museum Definition, Prospects and Potentials* (MDPP), was composed of seven and then nine members and chaired by the Danish Jette Sandahl. The objective of the committee was to carry out a global study on the trends linked to the development of the museum phenomenon and to propose definitions to the ICOM Executive board reflecting these evolutions, so that the board could choose one that would be voted in 2019 at Kyoto. The International Committee for Museology (ICOFOM) not having been associated at first with this work, decided to organize a consultation process around the world by means of conferences, the first being launched in Paris in June 2017. It is in this context that the ICOM Executive Board decided on my integration, as President of ICOFOM, into the MDPP, which was also joined by Alberto Garlandini, Vice-President of ICOM. ICOFOM thus organized ten conferences (Paris, Beijing, Rio, Buenos Aires, Quebec, etc.) and published three reports on the museum definition.²

I will not mention here the reasons which led me to resign from this group, when it became clear for me that none of the five definitions that would be proposed corresponded to the criteria I considered to be essentials for a museum definition. As soon as it was adopted by the board and published through Internet, the first reactions emerged, ranging from astonishment to indignation. Very quickly, three committees – ICOM Europe, ICOM France and ICOFOM – decided to draft an open letter to the President of ICOM asking to postpone the vote and continue the discussions in order to develop a more consensual proposal. The letter, signed by 27 national committees and 7 international committees, was sent in August to Suay Aksoy.

The Kyoto Conference thus started in an atmosphere of great tension, most of the informal discussions revolving around ‘the’ question. At this time, it seemed very difficult to know what could emerge from the September 7 vote, the number of voters per committee being identical for most committees: Barbados and Luxembourg have as much weight as France and Germany (which account for almost 25% of ICOM members). Proponents of the new definition – who were highly applauded – presented this proposal as the only possible solution to confront the challenges of the 21st century, accusing their detractors of undemocratism or conservatism. The moment for the Extraordinary General Assembly arrived on September 7 and took place in extraordinary chaos, with many reversals of the situation: scheduled for one hour, it would last four hours and lead to the adoption of the proposal to postpone the decision, to 70.4% of the votes.

ICOM definitions continuity

The ICOM museum definition, established in 1946 in order to be included in its Statutes, has been transformed many times (1951, 1961, 1974, 1989, 1995, 2001, 2007). Certain moments were undoubtedly more decisive than others. One of these major moments is linked to the 1971 crisis within ICOM. These were, in many ways, the same issues to those being discussed today, which were pushing several members to ask for a new definition. Hugues de Varine who was then the director of the organization, remembers this event:³

“When it was necessary to prepare for the 9th General Conference, which was to be held in Paris and Grenoble, the Executive Board decided to adopt the theme “*The museum at the service of men today and tomorrow*” and to invite as main lecturers political figures: two French ministers, German and Soviet ministers, a former minister from Dahomey (Benin today), Stanislas Adotevi, and the designer

of the new national museum in Mexico, Mario Vazquez. After an inaugural speech in Paris by the French Minister of Culture, Jacques Duhamel, who took liberties with the orthodoxy of his own ministry, followed in Dijon by that of the Minister for the Environment, Robert Poujade, who announced a new concept called *ecomuseum* for museums linked to nature and the environment, the sessions in Grenoble heard, among others, Mario Vazquez who asked museums to be made first for the people and free themselves from the constraints imposed by European tradition, then Stanislas Adotevi who demanded the de-Europeanization of cultures and museums in Africa.

This succession of non-conformist points of view encouraged a group of young participants from many countries, especially from Europe and North and South America, to ask, sometimes vehemently, for a modernization of the museum, its missions and its practices, and also a modernization of ICOM, its structures and the status of its members. The majority who remained attached to tradition reacted vigorously and there were fierce debates between the Ancients and the Moderns, which were finally arbitrated by the outgoing president, Arthur van Schendel, and the new president, Jan Jelinek”.

The 1970s young generation of curators urged changes, considering that the museum had to adapt to society. It is undoubtedly a moment of relatively similar tension that ICOM members experienced in Kyoto, even if that institution has changed a lot since that moment. On the other hand, Varine remembers that the definition itself, which was developed three years later following this desire for transformation, was adopted with a broad consensus (like all ICOM definitions). The 1974 definition is known, it has not changed much since then. It is in fact essentially the notions of tangible and intangible heritage of humanity that were added in 2007, during the last modification. On the other hand, an element, which is perhaps more fundamental than what was imagined at the time, has been removed: the famous list of institutions recognized by ICOM as museums, which included nine detailed categories. It was notably this list which made it possible, for national committees, to identify the establishments that could become members and those which did not enter the general framework or for which a discussion had to prevail.

The current definition illustrates the continuity that has operated between all the definitions previously considered by generations of ICOM professionals: if we take the terms used in the previous definitions (in italics and dated in brackets), we can see this principle of continuity with previous generations at work.

“A museum is a *non-profit* (1974), *permanent* (1951) *institution* (1961) *in the service of society and its development* (1974), *open to the public* (1946), *which acquires* (1974), *conserves* (1951), *researches* (1951), *communicates* (1974) and *exhibits* (1951) the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment (1974) for the purposes of *study* (1961), *education* (1961) and *enjoyment* (1961).”

The definition of 2007 therefore results from a long sedimentation between these different moments of evolution and integrated all the discussions of professionals on the principle of the museum, in a harmonious manner and respecting generations of professionals who have succeeded

each other. The definition presented in Kyoto, on the other hand, is radically different from the previous ones. If we try the same exercise as for the 2007 definition, we get:

Museums are democratizing, inclusive and polyphonic spaces for critical dialogue about the pasts and the futures. Acknowledging and addressing the conflicts and challenges of the present, they hold artefacts and specimens in trust for *society* (1974), safeguard diverse memories for future generations and guarantee equal rights and equal access to *heritage* (2007) for all people.

Museums are *not for profit* (1974). They are participatory and transparent, and work in active partnership with and for diverse communities to collect, preserve, *research* (1951), interpret, *exhibit* (1951), and enhance understandings of the world, aiming to contribute to human dignity and social justice, global equality and planetary wellbeing.

The search for terms previously used by ICOM reveals a desire for radical change, to say the least, since only five terms (out of nearly one hundred) come from previous definitions. Emilie Girard, for ICOM France, had done quite similar work to examine how the definition proposal debated in Kyoto reflected the 269 definition proposals that had been presented in 2019 by members or by national or international committees, during the call for proposals made by ICOM during this year.

Museums are democratizing (5.2%), inclusive (9.3%) and polyphonic (0.4%) spaces (23.8%) for critical dialogue (7.4%) about the pasts (plural, 0.4% – singular, 13.4%) and the futures (plural, 0.4% – singular, 20%). Acknowledging and addressing the conflicts (0.4%) and challenges (3%) of the present (13.4%), they hold artefacts (4.8%) and specimens (1.1%) in trust for society (31.6%), safeguard (6%) diverse memories (14.1%) for future generations and guarantee equal rights (1.9%) and equal access (11.5%) to heritage (46%) for all people (17.1%).

Museums are not for profit (23%). They are participatory (8.2%) and transparent (5.2%), and work in active partnership with and for diverse communities (13.8%) to collect (12.3%), preserve (26%), research (37.2%), interpret (7.4%), exhibit (34.9%), and enhance understandings (8.2%) of the world, aiming to contribute to human dignity (1.9%) and social justice (0.7%), global equality (4.5%) and planetary wellbeing (0.4%).⁴

Certain generic terms (society, preservation, study, exhibition) have been widely used by contributors; on the other hand, a large number of others (especially the terms which gave rise to the most discussion, such as ‘polyphonic’, ‘social justice’, etc.), seem to barely reflect the ICOM members’ proposals.

Definition and mission statement

The reasons given for refusing (or postponing) the Kyoto proposal are known, they were still widely mentioned during the meeting of March 10 organized in 2020 by ICOM France, which brought together representatives of more than forty national and international committees around these questions.⁵ The proposal is less a definition than a kind of value statement, the terms are often vague and confused and do not correspond, from a lexicographic point of view, to what one expects from a definition. It is too long,

impossible to remember, and its structure is of a rare complexity. The adoption of this definition could have important consequences from a legal point of view, particularly regarding its use in national law or in international jurisdiction (the UNESCO 2015 *Recommendation on museums and collections*). If taken literally, it would also lead to the exclusion of most of the current members, as almost all museums (including the Louvre) do not meet the criteria of the definition.

I would like to focus more specifically on two elements regarding the origin of this new definition: its form and its sources of inspiration.

If the Kyoto definition does not resemble, lexicographically, a definition, if it does not really reflect the proposals made by ICOM members, nor the previous definitions, what then would be its origins? The difficulty of interpreting this proposition as a definition has been mentioned several times, stressing its character of a 'mission statement' or a 'value statement'.

A mission statement, or the definition of the missions of an organization, is part of the reflection on its overall strategy, of which it constitutes an important step (the value statement is associated with that exercise). It aims to formulate, in a short paragraph, the nature of a business, as well as the values and objectives that its leaders and the organization want to set and share with their stakeholders. It is presented as a roadmap, a noticeably short statement of the main objectives and goals to be achieved.⁶ This strategic approach, however, differs widely from a definition. It is thus not necessary to describe what the organization actually does, but rather to evoke the purpose behind what it does. For example, the mission statement of BBC radio and television is:

"To act in the public interest, serving all audiences through the provision of impartial, high-quality and distinctive output and services which inform, educate and entertain".⁷

This sentence would be an awfully bad definition of what the BBC is, since it does not even mention television or radio which are its main activities. The principle is the same for museums. As an example, the mission statement of the Museum of World Culture in Gothenburg is as follows:

"The aim of the Museum of World Culture is to function as a platform for dialogues and reflections, where many different voices can be heard and controversial and contentious topics discussed – a place where people can feel at home and reach across borders".⁸

Here too, the museum is not talking about collections, research, or exhibitions, but about dialogue, polyphony, and controversy. These principles are welcomed by Peter and Leontine van Mensch who presented them in a book published in 2015⁹ by stressing that if the museum of Gothenburg continues like any museums to work with its collections and to exhibit them, its mission stands out from this logic to assert its social commitment. We are obviously tempted to note the close resemblance between this mission statement and the definition of Kyoto, especially as we know that Jette Sandahl directed this museum (she was no longer director when this statement was developed, around 2012–13).

A mission statement is linked to the organization that conceived it, it is unique as it is established in coherence with its

values and its stakeholders. In this it differs radically from a definition, which seeks on the contrary the common denominator of the organizations which it attempts to describe. If we compare the Kyoto definition with the Gothenburg Mission statement, we must recognize their similarity... as a mission statement. As a definition, on the other hand, that proposed in Kyoto could include many museums like that of Gothenburg, but would the same be said of most of the tens of thousands of other museums around the world?

Museum diversity

It appears interesting at this stage to review the committees who positioned in favor or against the proposal during the Extraordinary General Assembly. The supporters who took the floor in order to postpone the vote were (by speaking order) France, Austria, Canada, ICOM Europe, the Committee for Education and Cultural Action (CECA), the Committee for Regional Museums (ICR), ICOFOM, Belgium, ICOM LAC (Latin American countries), Argentina, Germany, Brazil, Italy, Iran and Israel. The committees in favor of a vote were Australia, the Netherlands, the International Committee for Management (INTERCOM), the United States and Denmark. The list of these countries, combined with the quality of the members of the MDPP, deserve to be analyzed.

It will be noted at the outset that the Asian as well as African countries were noticeably quiet during the process, carried by two different but Western visions of the museum. Jette Sandahl, chair of the MDPP committee, created the Women's Museum in Denmark, before working at the Te Papa Museum in New Zealand and then directing the Museum of World Culture in Gothenburg, Sweden. The members chosen were all connected to Anglo-Saxon culture, most of them being deeply involved in their specific domain of interest. Richard West founded the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington DC, David Fleming, former director of the Liverpool Museum, was particularly invested in the defence of human rights, Margaret Anderson, Australian feminist historian, directed the Migration Museum, etc. We must here emphasize the very high quality of the members associated with this museum reflection, and their commitment to such values which appear as very important topics in the current museum world: gender, postcolonial or decolonization, community dialogue, democracy, sustainable development, etc. However, we may question the representativeness of these actors as regards the museum world.

It could be interesting to examine the reasons for advocating for these specific values. The commitment to the values behind this new definition may be based on the social roots of the museum, which are widely favored around the world, as ICOFOM was able to observe through its debates.¹⁰ This trend has grown strongly over the past ten years in the Anglo-Saxon world, but also in Latin countries. It is not new, as it was found in the background of the debates of the ICOM General Conference of 1971. However, this vision of the museum is reinforced by a more critical gaze on the institution, emerging in the late 1980s with the (British) New museology¹¹ in which the museum is analyzed from its political role, in the light of Foucault and French Theory. This type of reading, close to cultural studies, was in turn

influenced by gender and postcolonial studies, from a resolutely multicultural perspective. The classical museum is thus called into question for its approach considered too universalist, Western and imperialist, male, and white, neglecting minorities. This principle may be found in the report presented by the MDPP in 2019, mentioning the need for such changes:

“Museums as institutions were shaped at the intersection of a spirited quest for knowledge and new scientific paradigms with the extreme violence employed by European powers in the colonisation of the Americas, in the enslavement of populations in Africa, in religious persecutions and expulsions within Europe”.¹²

From a museological point of view, such a reading of museum activity is undoubtedly stimulating, offering new perspectives for questioning the notion of museum around the world. However, it shows its limits if it presents itself as the only possible reading key, leaving in the shade other angles of analysis (the economic perspective of the museum system is here surprisingly neglected). According to this new doxa, the museum will be multicultural and active or better activist, tackling the problems of society (from human rights to global warming), or it will not be. If there is no doubt that such establishments must be able to play a major role and are sometimes among the most exciting to attend, should we therefore limit museum diversity from this single component? Should all museums, including the Louvre or the National Museum in Warsaw, tackle the question of human rights or global warming as a priority? As for the principle

of collections, should it be put into perspective so that it no longer practically appears as one of the constituent parts of the museum system? Paradoxically, the desire for inclusion advocated by the new definition, in this perspective, seems very largely to exclude any other form of vision.

In conclusion, if the ICOM definition is first and foremost fairly classic, it is because it first fits into a text that has legal status. Statutes are not strategic plans. The statutory definition aims to bring together its members, sharing sometimes very different visions and values on the museum, in order to define who can be affiliated with ICOM and not what are the objectives of the organization or those of each museum. It is also linked to a certain number of legal texts: we find the ICOM definition in many national laws¹³ and especially within UNESCO which adopted it in its 2015 recommendation, a fundamental text for a large number of Member States without museum legislation. It is therefore no longer wholly owned by ICOM, so to speak, but also by its various stakeholders.

According to the principles of a definition, the museum definition should specify the characteristics which unite its current and future members. ICOM certainly needs values and perhaps a mission statement, a strategic reflection on the place of museums in the world, but this is a different work which must be carried out in parallel with that of definition, without harmful interference between the two projects. There would be a great risk, if not, of a separation or a possible breakdown of ICOM structures, rather than its strengthening.

Abstract: The author analyses the logic underlying the ICOM museum definition process and the sense of continuity among the different definitions, since its creation in 1946. The new definition proposed in Kyoto in 2019 (during the ICOM General Conference, 1–7 September) created a risk of breaking within this continuity and the museum

community. The definition process is here put in parallel with the notion of mission statement, associated with strategic management, and the value system linked to a resolutely activist vision of the museum, integrating such topics as gender, postcolonialism, sustainable development or human rights.

Keywords: museum definition, museology, new museology, postcolonial studies, ICOM, ICOFOM.

Endnotes

¹ I had the opportunity to write several times about the ICOM museum definition. Preliminary (and shorter) French versions of this article were written in: “La bataille de Kyoto”, *La lettre de l’OCIM*, 187, January–February 2020, pp. 57–60; “Définitions et missions du musée”, *Proceedings of the ICOM committees day of March 10*, 2020, Paris, ICOM France (to be published).

² *Définir le musée du XXI^e siècle. Matériaux pour une discussion*, F. Mairesse (ed.), ICOFOM, Paris 2017; *Defining Museums of the 21st century: plural experiences*, B. Brulon Soares, K. Brown, O. Nator (ed.), ICOFOM, Paris 2018; Y.S.Chung, A. Leshchenko, B. Brulon Soares, *Defining the Museum of the 21st Century. Evolving Multiculturalism in Museums in the United States*, ICOFOM/ICOM, Paris 2019.

³ Personal conversation with the author, January 2020, and unpublished article written in 2020.

⁴ See ICOM France website: <https://www.icom-musees.fr/index.php/actualites/proposition-de-la-nouvelle-definition-du-musee>.

⁵ The numerous documents on this meeting are available at <https://www.icom-musees.fr/actualites/les-musees-aujourd'hui-et-demain-definitions-missions-deontologies>.

⁶ F. Mairesse, *Gestion de projets culturels. Conception, mise en œuvre, direction*, Armand Colin, Paris 2016, pp. 26–31.

⁷ <https://mission-statement.com/bbc/>

⁸ See: <http://www.varldskulturmuseerna.se/en/varldskulturmuseet/about-the-museum/>

⁹ P. & L. van Mensch, *New Trends in Museology II*, Museum of Recent History, Celje 2015, p. 15.

¹⁰ K. Brown, F. Mairesse, *The Definition of the Museum through Its Social Role*, w: „Curator: The Museum Journal” 61, 04.07.2018, pp. 525–539.

¹¹ *The New Museology*, P. Vergo (ed.), Reaktion books, London 1989.

¹² MDPP reports of December 2018 can be found at https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/MDPP-report-and-recommendations-adopted-by-the-ICOM-EB-December-2018_EN-2.pdf

¹³M. Rivet, *La définition du musée: que nous disent les droits nationaux*, in: F. Mairesse, *Définir le musée...*, pp. 53-123.

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POLITICAL UNDERTONE OF THE NEW ICOM MUSEUM DEFINITION, OR MANOEUVERING A TRANSATLANTIC AMONG ICEBERGS

Magdalena Lorenc

Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan

Motto

Do what you think appropriate (here he goes finger twiddling) or what you don't think (more finger twiddling), as it is your problem (finger twiddling again), to avoid any Misfortune, or maybe not to avoid (finger twiddling once more).

(transl. M. Iwińska) Witold Gombrowicz
Trans-Atlantyk, Instytut Literacki, Paris 1953

Introduction

It is not easy when in fundamental issues decency is expected. However, what do these words mean when we have in mind the International Council of Museums (ICOM) working out a new museum definition?

The museum definition is of systemic importance for ICOM, since it demarcates the area of activity of this international non-governmental organization grouping museum curators. It is also understandable that over the decades since the founding of ICOM in 1946, the scope of the 'museum' concept has been changing, and the updating of the earlier solutions was necessary. However, ICOM's works on the museum definition should be an exemplary legislative proceeding, so that its effects might be, all the more willingly, implemented within national legal regulations of the

interested states. Which means that apart from involving consultancy and a consensus, transparency and democratic procedures, as much as pluralism, due diligence is needed for the editing process. This is of particular importance when attempts are made to confer a new meaning onto the existing concept (which actually happens to be of fundamental importance). Meanwhile, the proposal presented at the ICOM General Conference in Kyoto on 1–7 September 2019 did not comply with these requirements.

The basic question refers to the political undertones of the new museum definition, this including the reasons for which the participants of the ICOM General Conference decided to postpone the vote, and opted for further works on the definition. I understand politics here in the spirit of Michel Foucault as the knowledge-power activity. In this sense, all the sphere of this institution is political, thus

requiring a political perspective. Meanwhile, for a part of museum curators politics still constitutes an antithesis of neutrality possible, and in their view, essential in the case of a cultural institution.

The belief in objectivism and meta-narrative is the legacy of the Enlightenment and Positivism of which the majority of contemporary humanist-social researchers are critical due to the conviction that there are no objective data and impartial observers. This applies also to the functioning of: museums, ICOM, its national committees, as well as all the individuals working at museums, and also to the bodies that administer them and research into them. A 'neutral museum' is a theoretical construct, not a description of the reality. This is a consequence on the one hand of the organizational and financial dependence on the administrators and donors, on the other of the exerting of the power functions by the institution, covering the disciplining and constructing of subjects; after Tony Bennett: patrons, experts, and visitors.¹

The unacceptance of the political engagement of a museum is a legacy of the pejorative perception of politics. This attitude stems from a realistic paradigm of thinking of politics, whose antecedents are the legacies of Thucydides, Machiavelli, and Hobbes. The good sovereign was the one who, having gained power, succeeded in holding onto it, regardless of the applied means and methods. Thus, the category of 'good' was identified with 'effective', not 'moral'. The teleological argument (though this applied to exceptional situations) abolished the criterion of ethicality or made it inadequate in the assessment of politics. Non-ethicality of politics also constituted the foundation of legal positivism, one of the trends in the philosophy of law in the 19th and 20th centuries, which claimed there was no validation relation, thus directives issued by the sovereign did not have to comply with moral values and norms.²

When in the 1980s there was talk of an 'ethical turn' in social and humanist sciences, and in the late 1980s of 'political' (or 'ethical-political' turn), ethics and politics ceded to 'ethicality' and 'politicality'. It was not so much about a traditional approach to ethics as a subdiscipline of metaphysics or non-ethical politics as institutionalized struggle for power and its maintaining. This was expressed in the theory and activity targeted at the protection of marginalized minorities' rights. Activism being the immanent element in the ethical-political shift meant research into all the manifestations of discrimination and violence. According to the followers of the so-called engaged humanities, the truth and objectivism should be replaced by justice.³

Changes in the way of thinking of politics in axiological categories have not spared museums and museology. An important role in this respect was played by the 1989 anthology titled *The New Museology* edited by Peter Vergo.⁴ It was the result of the debates conducted from the late 1970s, mainly within the Anglo-Saxon environment, on the context of the social functioning of museums. The published texts revealed a project of a 'new museology' perceived, in opposition to the 'old' one, as a science of a museum that is a historical construct, determined by the time and place of its existence. The theoretical reflection was interwoven with a museological praxis of museums, a part of which (most promptly ethnographic museums) began to critically view

their history and admit that they were not so much places of contemplation, but of interpretation. The occurring changes seemed to justify the search for a new definition of a museum as an institution involved in power and ideology. The Kyoto proposal was precisely the exemplification of such-perceived politicality.

Old definitions and new claims

The museum definition has been ICOM's concern since the founding conference held at the Paris Louvre on 16–20 November 1946. The international NGO established then was affiliated to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). ICOM was founded to support museums' activity, this including: setting out terminology standards, systematics, and museum ethics.⁵ The organization's work results were to be later formulated as guidelines and subsequently promoted by national committees, like ICOM Polish National Committee (PKN ICOM) based in Warsaw, and existing since 1948.⁶ It is thus not surprising that for ICOM the museum definition is of fundamental importance.

Over the years, the group now participated by 138 countries, have on several occasions attempted to define the 'museum' institution.⁷ Until 2019, the solution used was that kept in the spirit of the 'classical' definition of Georges Henri Rivière implying that a museum is permanent non-profit institution open to the public which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the collections for the purposes of education and enjoyment. In 1946–2007, the definition changes introduced by ICOM actually referred to its scope. Apart from museums in the strict meaning of the term, it also encompassed: vivaria, science centres, natural reserves, etc. In compliance with the regulations of 5 September 1989 adopted in the Hague and amending ICOM's Statutes, in addition to the institutions earlier designated as 'museums', it was the Executive Council which, after seeking advice of the Advisory Committee, considers an institution to be a museum or not.⁸ At the same time, the Statutes introduced the necessity to consider characteristics of a museum as a precondition for considering the institution as a museum. To put it simply, *a museum is what ICOM considers a museum* (See Art. 2.1.b.vi). Such a phrasing travesties the institutional definition of art by George Dickie stating that art, to put it simply, is what the artworld (in Arthur Danto's meaning of the term) considers to be art.⁹

Although ICOM's documents do not have a binding force for member countries, the organization's authority makes the guidelines it formulates affect the museological circles. The example can be seen in the application of the 1989 ICOM museum definition (with the amendments introduced at ICOM's General Conferences in Stavanger on 7 July 1995 and in Barcelona on 6 July 2001) in the works of the European Group on Museum Statistics (EGMUS) established in 2002. In the first broader publication of EGMUS of December 2004 the definitions of a museum used in 23 European countries were put together, of which a part, including Poland, assumed the ICOM phrasing as basis for their own museum-related regulations.¹⁰ The study, however, pointed to the differences in the interpretation of the

basic concepts. It demonstrated the weakness of the ICOM definition, which could be accounted for by cultural differences (also a different legal culture of respective states). However, the museum institution is of the European provenance, and one could expect that countries of this region were able to work out definition standards that are applicable in Europe. Thus, if the European countries have been unable to assume solutions that they would universally accept and understand, it seems all the more challenging to achieve a consensus with representatives of different cultural traditions for which a museum is an alien institution. Therefore, there exists no museum definition formulated by ICOM and adopted in its statute documents which would later be universally implemented by its member states, even across Europe. The adopted definition solutions merely suggest the desired direction, leaving decision freedom to the interested parties.

Moreover, the *ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums* adopted in 2004 is but a collection of recommendations. There the concept of a 'museum' implies:

*a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment.*¹¹

At the same time the document makes the reservation that the museum definition was formulated temporarily to enable the application of the Code.¹²

Currently, ICOM uses the museum definition included in its Statutes in the phrasing adopted by the 22nd General Conference in Vienna on 24 August 2007. The definition treats a museum as:

*a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.*¹³

The above-quoted definitions, very much alike, do not take into consideration the differentiations of museums as such, or the challenges they face in the 21st century. In order to adjust to the changes, following the 2016 Milan General Conference, ICOM members established a new Standing Committee whose goal was to update the so-far Statute definition they regarded as anachronistic. The task was assigned to the Committee on Museum Definition, Prospects and Potentials, MDPP (2017–19). Its Chair Jette-Sandhal, arguing there was a need to work out a new museum definition, pointed first of all to the necessity to take into account the changes which have occurred over the previous years. Museums and society are not two separate worlds. Therefore, the need arose to create a definition not limited to formulating that a museum is open to the public, that it educates and provides enjoyment, but also that its role is to participate in interactions and to reveal conflicts. In her eyes, the new definition could not ignore the consequences of the Anthropocene and treat mankind in separation from the natural environment, global warming, and climate change.¹⁴ This attitude was reflected in MDPP's recommendations for the ICOM Executive Board adopted on 9 December 2018, which emphasized that the new definition should:¹⁵

- the museum definition should be clear on the purposes of museums, and on the value base from which museums meet their sustainable, ethical, political, social and cultural challenges and responsibilities in the 21st century;
- the museum definition should retain – even if current terminology may vary – the unique, defining and essential unity in museums of the functions of collecting, preserving, documenting, researching, exhibiting and in other ways communicating the collections or other evidence of cultural heritage;
- the museum definition should acknowledge the urgency of the crises in nature and the imperative to develop and implement sustainable solutions;
- the museum definition should acknowledge and recognise with respect and consideration the vastly different world views, conditions and traditions under which museums work across the globe;
- the museum definition should acknowledge and recognise with concern the legacies and continuous presence of deep societal inequalities and asymmetries of power and wealth – across the globe as well as nationally, regionally and locally;
- the museum definition should express the unity of the expert role of museums with the collaboration and shared commitment, responsibility and authority in relation to their communities;
- the museum definition should express the commitment of museums to be meaningful meeting places and open and diverse platforms for learning and exchange;
- the museum definition should express the accountability and transparency under which museums are expected to acquire and use their material, financial, social, and intellectual resources.

The Kyoto museum definition

In January 2019, ICOM invited its members, national committees, and other interested parties to present their own positions regarding the new museum definition. It was supposed to meet the claims formulated in December 2018. This cooperation resulted in the definition proposal presented by the ICOM Executive Board during the 139th Session in Paris held on 21–22 July 2019. It read as follows:

*Museums are democratising, inclusive and polyphonic spaces for critical dialogue about the pasts and the futures. Acknowledging and addressing the conflicts and challenges of the present, they hold artefacts and specimens in trust for society, safeguard diverse memories for future generations and guarantee equal rights and equal access to heritage for all people. Museums are not for profit. They are participatory and transparent, and work in active partnership with and for diverse communities to collect, preserve, research, interpret, exhibit, and enhance understandings of the world, aiming to contribute to human dignity and social justice, global equality and planetary wellbeing.*¹⁶

Defining is a linguistic operation consisting in introducing a new expression into the language and the means of its understanding, or a new understanding for the already existing expression. ICOM's goal was the latter: giving a new meaning to the existing 'museum' concept. Since the definition was to form part of the organisation's Statutes, it should be assumed

that it complies with the requirements of legal acts' phrasing. Meanwhile, the Kyoto definition is broad and incoherent, while the wording it uses ambiguous. Bearing these faults in mind, it could not be implemented in national legal regulations of the states that would be interested to do so, even if it had been adopted by ICOM. Actually, the basic question that should be formulated with reference to the Kyoto proposal boils down to asking whether it can essentially be called a definition.

Definitions differ among themselves. It is their kind that defines whether a definition is correct. However, regardless of the kind, definitions are built of a *definiendum*, namely of what is defined, a *definiens*, or the collection of attributes of what is defined, and a *copula*, connecting the first with the latter. Museums are the *definiendum*, 'are' is the *copula*, while the *definiens* is as follows: 'democratising, inclusive and polyphonic spaces for critical dialogue about the pasts and the futures'. From the structure of the Kyoto proposal it can be assumed that ICOM's ambition was to delineate the scope of the name 'museum' by providing a set of qualities constituting its characteristic content, which, following Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz, implies such a set of attributes that each *designatum* features each of the attributes and that only the *designata* of the name feature each of the attributes of that set.¹⁷ For the sake of comparison, let us add that it differs in the range of attributes provided in dictionaries and encyclopaedia limited to essential (constitutive) contents and defined as 'definition minimum'.

The Kyoto definition proves that a museum is a name for which it was impossible to find another name of the same meaning. In this situation, the attempt was made to create a definition by giving a name that is superordinate and/or subordinate to the name 'museum'. In the first case, it is the necessary condition, in the latter, a sufficient condition. If both conditions are fulfilled and the scope of the defined name equals the scope of the name with which it is defined, then the definition is adequate.¹⁸ However, this is not the case, since no normal (full) definition has been created. In the Kyoto definition a museum is subordinate to *space...*, namely the *definiendum* scope is narrower than the scope of the name with which it is defined. It can thus be assumed that the authors of the definition undertook the attempt to define their concept through a necessary condition in order to create a partial definition. However, this has also proven a failed attempt, since... *democratising, inclusive and polyphonic spaces for critical dialogue about the pasts and the futures...* can hardly be regarded as a necessary condition, owing to the ambiguous and enigmatic character of the used concepts.

In view of the criterion of defining means, neither can the Kyoto proposal be an explicit or contextual definition. In the first case, the *definiendum* should contain only the defined phrase, in the latter, also other phrasings, albeit only in the earlier-defined meanings.¹⁹ Meanwhile, the phrasing of the *definiens* in the new museum definition does not only contain the defined expression, while *democratizing, inclusive and polyphonic* do not mean anything specific when talking about space. This ambiguity of the used expressions may cause interpretative disputes. Such a fault is unacceptable in the phrasing of a definition, either in legal acts or informative texts. Neither is it an entangled definition, in other words, a definition through claims, since it hardly provides the axioms defining the original meaning of the used terms.

Definitions can also be classified in view of their purpose, namely responding the question: why is the expression defined? The answer can be brought down to: providing the meaning of the defined expression, clarifying the meaning of the defined expression, introducing a new expression into the dictionary, shaping the attitude of the language users towards the object that the defined expression refers to.²⁰ The Kyoto proposal is not a real definition, either, namely it does not contain the characteristics of peculiar attributes shared by the objects that fill the scope of the term. The same problem can be pointed to in the case of the definition of the 'nation', in whose case, as remarked by Stefan Nowak, *the term's scope with its universally accepted meaning is either too internally inhomogeneous or too indiscernible from certain phenomena which do not belong to this scope that constructing adequate characteristics which would attribute certain qualities to all the elements of this scope, and only them, is not possible.*²¹ The Kyoto proposal is thus the closest to the desire of formulating a new attitude to the museum, alternative to the currently existing. This new attitude is identical, according to the definitions' authors, with a 'critical' attitude. The teleological criterion is connected here with an emotional stylization, yet first of all with the emphasizing of the axiological dimension of a 'museum'.

The Kyoto definition seems to be aspiring to the term of a nominal definition, defining the linguistic meaning of the name 'museum'. Nominal definitions are divided into two categories: reporting (analytical) and projecting (synthetical). If, following Nowak, reporting definitions are a description of a certain linguistic habit within a given environment, then the projecting definition is a recommendation of a certain meaning of the term.²² ICOM's proposal can be treated at most as a projecting definition meant to recommend a certain meaning of the term 'museum', and not to describe the actual linguistic habit. It is necessary to emphasize at this point what Nowak pointed to, namely that although the reporting and projecting definitions may grammatically sound identical (term A means this and that), the sense of the latter boils down to: 'I suggest to use term A in this and that meaning'.²³ Thanks to this it may also be regarded as aspiring to being a regulating definition, namely a sub-class of the nominal projecting definition. This kind of a definition is useful when the existing ones are regarded to need a change, which was phrased by MDPP in the claims formulated in December 2018.

I do, however, believe that the new ICOM definition form Kyoto is the closest to the structural (arbitrary) definition. It is a *projecting definition which, when defining the meaning of the phrase for the future, does not care about the meaning the phrase or definition it is introducing into the language has had so far.*²⁴ The trouble is that following the Kyoto definition the majority of the institutions existing now and regarded to be museums would no longer be ones. Thus, the discussed proposal is not a definition, but a programmatic declaration expressing the stand of the group of decision-makers inside ICOM on the museum vision.

A political manifesto

During the ICOM General Conference held in Kyoto, Japan, on 1–7 September 2019, the vote conducted on the last day of the Conference resulted in the majority of 70.41 per

cent deciding to postpone the voting on the new museum definition. The arguments of its opponents referred mainly to it being useless for the possible implementations in the internal legal system of respective countries. It was the vagueness of the applied terms, thus inadequate diligence with the actual phrasing that was criticized. During the talks it was also emphasized that the consultation group should be extended, first of all during the decision-making process, to secure the broadest possible representation of the involved parties.²⁵

Apart from the justified accusations related to phrasing errors and the lack of pluralism in the works on the new definition, the basic doubts were related to the political involvement of museums as *spaces for critical dialogue*. The assumption was that it was a project concerning the future, not stating the actual realities, e.g. in the fragment saying that museums *work in active partnership with and for diverse communities... aiming to contribute to human dignity and social justice, global equality, and planetary wellbeing*. Pluralism, justice, egalitarianism, equality, and the planet's wellbeing have become the values marking out the horizon of the new museum mission. This was an attempt at fulfilling the 2018 MDPP's claim that the new museum definition should be *clear on the purposes of museums, and on the value base from which museums meet their sustainable, ethical, political, social and cultural challenges and responsibilities in the 21st century*.

The ideological orientation that was at the grounds of those demands had its source in the moral changes related to the 1968 protest movement, in the emancipation of minorities (cultural, sexual), as well as in the post-colonial and feminist thoughts. Thanks to them it was possible to identify mechanisms of exclusion, while the goal was the fight for justice in defence of the discriminated. The new axiology being shaped did not spare museums, of which some began to take into account subversive criticism in their educational offer.²⁶ One of the opponents of such a museum praxis was Jean Clair, a long-standing Director of the Musée Picasso in Paris, who in his prophetic essay bearing a meaningful title *Crisis of Museums* wrote of the *new public and active minorities* for whose sakes museums organize *silly rituals*.²⁷ Alongside these disputes about the vision, mission, and practice of the present and future museums, their value was assessed in compliance with 'public value' (in the meaning given to it by Mark Moore).²⁸

However, regardless of whether museums became involved in the current politics or not, there was a consensus on the role they played as far as collecting, preserving, and making collections available to the public are concerned. Thus, museum definitions were inclusive, meaning that they tried to include broadly understood museum institutions. Meanwhile, the Kyoto proposal did not have this value, requiring from all the museums (i.e. institutions and their staff) to conduct a critical reflection, no matter how differentiated they were. However, since the museum curators' circle has been divided on the issue of the museum mission what needed to have been done first was to work out a consensus in a group larger than MDPP.

The departure point for the new museum definition should be, as it seems, the ascertainment of the representatives of the social and humanistic sciences in the latter half of the

20th century that each and every institution (a cultural institution included) is political and applies violence, albeit not physical, but symbolical: in the meaning of Pierre Bourdieu and consisting in the privileged class imposing the cultural contents legitimizing their power and turning the dominating-subduing relation into a natural one.²⁹

What particularly matters in this respect is the accomplishment of Foucault whose merit was to discover the 'micro-physics of power' consisting in the mutual, clear, and hidden impact of knowledge and power. Power, in his understanding, was polymorphic and relational, thus far from a 'classical' formulation, limiting it to strictly political institutions. In Foucault's view, the knowledge-power activity impacted all the seemingly ideologically neutral discourses, e.g. psychiatric, sexual, or penitentiary.³⁰ Analogical conclusions were drawn as far as a museum discourse was concerned.³¹ It was only following a thorough analysis that the mechanisms of excluding the Other in it and means of constructing and reproducing the existing order were exposed. The first to have been criticized in this spirit were ethnographic museums in which for years the patronizing way of showing other cultures by Europeans prevailed. As a result of the application of archeo-genealogy, museums as institutions turned out not to be neutral, but political, thus involved in the reproduction of the existing system or criticizing the status quo (critical museums).³²

The Kyoto proposal exclusively referred to the 'critical museum', and not the whole spectrum of the museum reality. What also proved challenging was the orienting of the museum mission towards the future, when, apart from the museums of contemporary or modern art, the prevailing majority of those institutions are focused on the past. At the same time the words 'institution' and 'collection', well grounded in the so-far museum definitions, were avoided and supplanted by the enigmatic 'space', 'artifacts', and 'specimens'. Importantly, the definition did not take into account the people responsible for museums' statutory tasks, and only the potential addressees of the museums' message.

In January 2020, ICOM Executive Board founded a new Standing Committee (MDPP2), assigning it with the further works on creating an 'alternative' definition (as it is referred to as distinct from the Statutory 2007 definition) defining the role of museums in the 21st century. To meet the expectations, it is to start with the words: *Museums are...*, to later proceed in as general as possible terms to the normative, legislative, and ethical aspects of the functioning of the institution. In compliance with the adopted work schedule, the ambition of the ICOM Executive Board is to vote on the new definition on the 75th anniversary of the organization's establishment, which will be in June 2021.

A 'transatlantic liner' is, according to a Polish dictionary, *a large passenger ship regularly sailing across the Atlantic* [sic! so not all the oceans were concerned, but the sea transport between Europe and America]. The best-known example of such a ship was obviously RMS Titanic who sank on her first voyage having struck an iceberg. How does this, however, translate to the new museum definition? Seemingly, there is no relation, except for the failure in both cases. The stories of the Titanic and of the Kyoto ICOM museum definition do

show, however, certain analogies. They are both idealistically motivated, they have structural errors, and neither is fully free from fraud. In the case of the transatlantic liner it was the advertising slogan *practically unsinkable* and the illusion of the power of a vessel equipped with as many as four funnels, of which the last one was a fake. The funnel number simply was of prestige and commercial importance, since it did not really affect the actual capacity of the liner. As for the Kyoto proposal, it was not a new museum definition that was presented, but a political manifesto of a museum as a participant in public debate fulfilling the mission of the engaged humanities. Its adoption would mean profaning of the tradition of thinking of museums in Rivière's spirit, still influential among museum curators, and firstly the exclusion of many organizations which have been called museums. Contrary to Titanic's passengers, the participants of the Kyoto ICOM General Conference in 2019 in a substantial majority rejected the presented proposal. Some of them justly judged that it did not meet the requirements expected of a definition in legal acts. Others did not feel affinity with the ideological background of the proposal's authors. Others still demanded an actual debate, and not merely a

declarative assurance of pluralism and democratic character of the decision-making process as well as the wish to construct a broad consensus. All these were the reasons why the vote on the new definition was postponed.

Twenty-seven years after the disaster of the Titanic, Witold Gombrowicz set off aboard another transatlantic liner, namely MS Chrobry. Fourteen years later, his novel *Trans-Atlantyk* was published. In the studies of the novel what draws the reviewers' attention is the tension between an individual experience and the values proclaimed by everybody around. The point is, however, that despite the pathos accompanying the latter, what is at the base of their motivations are frequently particularistic interests. An analogy is overwhelming in this respect, too, since the declarations of the universalism of certain values are not widely accepted, this well testified to in the new ICOM museum definition. The tension between the status quo, and what, in the view of some, should be there instead, which I metaphorically referred to in the title as *manoeuvring a transatlantic amidst icebergs*, led to a deadlock which does not seem possible to be overcome in the near future by working out and adopting a museum definition similar to the Kyoto proposal.

Abstract: The museum definition is of systemic importance for ICOM, since it demarcates the area of activity of this international non-governmental organization grouping museum curators. The answer to the question whether the new museum definition presented at the ICOM General Conference in Kyoto on 1–7 September 2019 reveals a political undertone is sought. The majority of the attendees did not support the put-forth proposal, opting to postpone the vote on its acceptance. What I mean by the 'political undertone of the new museum definition' is that the *definiens* takes into account

the fact that museums are institutions tangled up in exerting power and applying symbolic violence. According to the Kyoto definition museums are identified with critical museums, treated as space for public debate directed at the future. This vision did not convince the majority, since it excluded many institutions until now regarded to be museums from the museum category. As such, the Kyoto definition turned out not to be a definition, but a political manifesto of a group of museum curators. Additionally, not being coherent, it proved useless for phrasing legislative acts.

Keywords: museum definition, new museum definition, Kyoto museum definition, museum's political character, critical museum, ICOM.

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MUSEUM IN THE PROCESS. SELECTED TENDENCIES IN 20TH-CENTURY MUSEOLOGY

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Warsaw

In 1964, upon the formation of the International Council of Museums, ICOM, the definition of a museum, theoretically meant to be universal, was worked out.¹ Since then museums have faced many challenges, resulting both from global transformations, but also tensions and transformations within the very institution. The museum definition debated on during the 2019 Kyoto ICOM General Conference is one of the consequences of those processes. In order to better understand the discussion and the unrest that stemmed from the text worked out by the ICOM expert team, it is necessary to see a broader picture of the processes occurring in museums over the past century. It is actually hard to pick and describe the most important of them without fearing being accused of oversimplifying the topic. The changes have been occurring on many levels, in different disciplines, at different locations worldwide with different intensity and dynamics.

The present paper is merely an attempt at outlining a certain context which can be helpful for the discussion on the future of museums. Obviously, it is impossible to analyse all those processes and tendencies at the source of the transformations on several pages only. For practical reasons let me limit myself to signalling certain phenomena, merely providing the Reader with references wherever necessary.²

A museum is a *discovery* of an exceptional potential, as said by the American historian Donald Preziosi; in the 19th century, it *became an essential element of a modern bourgeois national state*.³ Its genius consists in describing

the world in compliance with the chronology that helps us order the reality around us through the prism of a contemporary experience.⁴ By this token a museum had on the one hand become a representative of a given culture, space for intellectual discourse of knowledge and the authorities, yet on the other their very practical tool. However, when raising stable structures of a museum it can be easily forgotten that its foundation is to be found in the tangible and intangible heritage, which by its very nature undergoes change. The revolutionary character of the museum concept discovered with time consists in the processual character of the institution.⁵ The changes that take place in museums have to do with both their role within public space, and the solutions (tools) they apply.

Museum entered the previous century as an expansive institution, already well-rooted in the European tradition, of a multi-layer ideological programme which, briefly speaking, combined an aesthetical approach to the amassed collections with participating in 'democratic education' and disciplining society.⁶ The museum model based on this scheme was implemented not only in Europe, but almost in every corner of the world affected by European colonization. Although the institution's scale, character, or operating mode depended to a great degree on local conditionings and their artists. The shaping of the system in the 19th century allowed to observe its weaker points and henceforth related problems, though it is worth emphasizing that the criticism of the Enlightenment museum accompanied the institution ever since its onset.⁷

It seems that in the first half of the 20th century the most interesting changes were taking place within museum education, art, and ethnography. The academic and cognitive function of a museum is inscribed in the essence of the institution which is (continually) based on a hierarchical system: the museum being the source of knowledge, and the public its recipient. Already at the onset of the previous century what began to change was the manner of sharing information, this influenced by e.g. views of John Ruskin, John Dewey, and European reformatory movements in pedagogics, the so-called new education.

The topic was tackled e.g. during the 1903 Mannheim Conference meaningfully titled: *Museums as Key Places of Public Education (Museen als Volksbildungsstätte)*.⁸ The main instigator of the meeting was Alfred Lichtwark, a teacher, Director of the Kunsthalle in Hamburg, one of the creators of museum education in this part of Europe. His recommendation was to forget dry historical lectures for the sake of stirring participants' aesthetical impressions and educating through art, which reflected the claims of the 'new education'. What served the purpose were e.g. guides, catalogues, sectioning out fragments within the display, as well as something that we would today call a 'museum class'.⁹ In Anglo-Saxon countries in which the call for changes harmonized with the already undertaken attempt at the museum reform, the Mannheim Conference received a lot of attention.¹⁰

However, the very transformation process of museum education was neither fast, nor easy. Museums continued one of the elements complementing school education, used to shape the attitude of the young public, marginalizing their individual predispositions or talents. It was also a credible source of knowledge for the grown-up public whose most important target public were 'educated men', obviously 'white'.¹¹ The unquestioned presence of women in museology as addressees, but more and more frequently as its co-creators, could be visible e.g. in the era of education.¹² However, the most essential change was related to the role of the public and their expectations of the museum. More and more frequently, formal education, typical of schools and universities, was opposed by knowledge gained through experience and activity, not directly associated with science. It is not surprising that progress in this respect was visible particularly in North America in the 1930s and 40s. Learning through fun and practice, adjusted to varied needs and knowledge levels, became a hallmark of informal education also in museums.

It was not by coincidence that the gradual introduction of change in the teaching manner coincided with the reform of the museum display following the spirit of the then aesthetics.¹³ This consisting, first of all, in the limitation of the number of the displayed objects and the adjusting of their layout to the visitor's perceptive capacity. The characteristic feature of that solution was the application of a neutral background which was to later develop into the famous *white cube*, as well as the introduction of balanced lighting and precise information on the objects. As a result, next to the most interesting and valuable collection pieces, also other objects that fit well into the museum narrative were displayed. Meanwhile, the resources hidden in storage rooms constituted the basis for academic research

and fuelled the imagination of critics and columnists. The appropriate selection and means of display, as well as conservation of museum collections required specialist knowledge, speeding up the formation of a museum professional.

Furthermore, interesting changes occurred in the field of art collecting. Artistic museums were one of the more important carriers of national identification, not only in the 'century of museums'.¹⁴ The shift of focus from the collections of old art testifying to the taste, wealth, and prestige, to national art was ongoing from the mid-19th century, however the process climaxed in the early 20th century.¹⁵ In the USA the essential turn towards national art occurred during WW II, while in the postcolonial countries the interest in their native artistic production increased along the regaining and structuring of their own identity. The reference made then was not always to contemporary art; more often the identification axis was, and continues to be, art of the ancestors, in European tradition placed within archaeology, antiquity, or ethnography. Nonetheless, it was still in the early 20th century that the process of extending the domain of art with subsequent, previously neglected phenomena, continued.¹⁶ This was contributed to by the searches of the Avant-garde who going well beyond the valid classifications and limits, introduced, if only momentarily, an 'anarchistic' cognitive chaos in the art of the given period.¹⁷

The resistance against artistic output that has not as yet passed its 'test' was strong enough to affect the activity of artistic museums. In the majority of cases the documentation of modern art occurred with a substantial delay, this observed by the American collector Gertrude Stein: in her view, museum by definition, cannot be modern. However, as if defiantly, the first museums of modern art had been created still before her famous observation was pronounced.¹⁸

In the first years following the Bolshevik Revolution, representatives of Russian Avant-garde worked out a museum concept: entirely exceptional and not used even at the moment of its creation. Rejecting the formula of the Enlightenment museum, they proposed the establishment of 'laboratories of contemporaneity'. Art Culture Museums were to be the venue for activity and experience extending the sphere of research, changeable, going beyond the limits of art, incorporating it into everyday life. Not only did the concept not coincide with the traditional museum vision of the time, but neither did it match the Communist world vision implemented by the Bolsheviks. It did not take the Communist authorities long to return to the 'traditional' museum concept, strictly subduing it to the ideology.¹⁹ Together with the artists emigrating from the Soviet Union, the ideas of the Russian Avant-garde reached the West. They were known both to Alfred H. Barr Jr (indirectly), the first Director of New York's Museum of Modern Art, MoMa (1929) and to Władysław Strzemiński (directly), initiator of the Collection of Modern Art of the 'a.r.' group deposited at the Julian and Kazimierz Bartoszewicz Municipal Museum of History and Art (1931).

More often, however, the 'traditional' artistic museum formula was applied, which did not prevent the promotion of this institution. Just like previously all museums, modern art museums, too, began to take root in the cityscape of capital cities and larger cities across all the continents.²⁰ The future was to show that the challenge to them was not

so much the topicality of the presented art, but first of all its domain: the sphere that went far beyond well-known painting, sculpture, or graphic art. For a long time the only response of the institution to the art pieces and artistic actions hard to classify, was to ignore them.

The changes occurring in the art of the late 19th and early 20th centuries were related to the growing popularity of artistic output from outside Europe: initially of the Far East, later also Africa and Oceania, the latter called *l'art nègre*, and later defined as primitive art. Ethnographic collections were characterized by a peculiar evolutionism. Classified artifacts were to 'tell stories' of the history of the development of (wild) man pertaining to a given community or geographical region. Noticing in them aesthetical values made the ethnographic objects potentially representatives of a given community and artistic objects as well.²¹ When becoming a testimony to a certain culture, it could no longer be treated equally as a product of nature, which eventually invalidated the traditional viewing of the art of 'primitive peoples'. This approach was reflected e.g. in the International Conference: Museography. Architecture and Management of Art Museums (Conférence internationale d'études sur l'architecture et l'aménagement des musées d'art), held in Madrid in 1934. The artistic value of ethnographic collections which did not negate the valid geographic and social classification, essentially transformed the context of their display. On the one hand the objects were to allow getting to know a given culture, while on the other, they served to 'enlighten exotic peoples'.²²

However, the best example in the shift of the approach to ethnography could be found in the latter's professionalization. Research missions, with the best known 1931 Dakar-Djibouti Mission conducted by French researchers, yielded new discoveries and thousands of objects which required an appropriate place for their studies and presentation. The Paris Trocadéro Ethnographic Museum (Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro) existing from 1878 with its 'archaic' concept could not meet these requirements. Therefore, the decision was made to create a new institution. Inaugurated in 1937, the Museum of Mankind (Musée de l'Homme) was created as if on the ruins of old ethnography.²³ The concept worked out by the ethnologist Paul Rivet combined the display space with research back rooms in the spirit of progressive humanism, above geographical, racial, and political divisions. This tendency was promptly continued also outside France. The Museum made attempts to present all cultures, except for the West European, with tolerance and respect for otherness, at the same time with reverence to aesthetical and scientific values. Thus, according to James Clifford, an American historian, *the Western order was present in the Musée de l'Homme everywhere except for the displays*.²⁴

All the above-mentioned processes, with the exception of the revolutionary, though almost unknown concepts of the Russian Avant-garde, fit well the flexible museum formula. Neither was the latter damaged by the devastation of WW I and II, despite the volume of victims and people's migration, annihilation of nations' and cultures' heritage, coupled with the transfer of museum objects: for their protection, through looting, and later through restoring efforts, yielded a serious reflection on the preservation of nations' tangible

and intangible heritage.²⁵ What definitely increased was the awareness of the ideological potential that can be brought about by museums' activity. The institution has taken such deep root in the reality around us that it would be difficult to imagine culture without museums even when one does not visit them. Theodore Low, an American educator, went as far as to state: *No one can deny that museums have powers which are of the utmost importance in any war of ideologies*.²⁶ These words proved really true during the Cold War when museums became more or less subtle ideological tools.

Despite the war turmoil museums entered the second half of the 20th century as modern institutions, of stable position, and a strong social mandate. It was, among others, the activity of ICOM that helped its further steady development.²⁷ The common platform for sharing knowledge and experience quite quickly demonstrated, however, that expectations were different and challenges facing contemporary museums so multifaceted. Let us enumerate at least some factors the changes are connected with. The first being undoubtedly globalization.²⁸ Although its connection with the democratic transformation continues debatable to researchers, the political transformation did have an essential impact on inspiring national awareness, and in consequence, also on the directions of the development of museums. Liberalization, struggle for equal rights, and the turn towards nature, yielded a wave of criticism of the establishment and the state-connected institutions. At the same time technological progress speeded up globalization processes, widening research and cognitive horizons of societies. Alongside the gradually more aggressive consumerism what could be observed were attempts to adjust standard solutions to the local needs of communities, the awakening nostalgia for the past, or rapture over new technologies.²⁹ The scale and pace at which these phenomena affect museums obviously vary.

The working out of shared standards of preservation, conservation, and displaying museum objects was one of the first tasks undertaken by ICOM. What served as the basis for that was first of all the experience of museologists from Europe and America. The international network of museums enabled sharing the defined standards, but also receiving feedback. The latter evidently demonstrated that in some parts of the world certain claims were difficult to implement, e.g. due to the conditions of cultural, social, political, or economic nature, as well as to the climate peculiarity of a given region. Just to give one instance: tropical climate accelerated destructive processes of museum objects, while economic conditions hampered the introduction of technological solutions appropriate for the collection preservation.³⁰ What also differed was the understanding of the authenticity of an object.³¹

Introducing into the decision-making processes representatives of museum-related circles from outside Europe or North America was thus connected with a multifaceted attitude to cultural heritage and required a change in the until-then applied approach. Debates on ICOM reform were undertaken on numerous occasions, accumulating in 1968, with the most tumultuous sessions between representatives of the conservative approach and the reformers taking place three years later, during the 9th General Conference

in France.³² The symptom of the change was the adoption of the resolution stating that museums have to accept the fact that societies undergo constant change, while one of the basic responsibilities of every such institution is to create solutions designed with society in mind as well as with the environment in which a given institution happens to be operating.

One of the most interesting responses to that claim is the 'New Museology', defined also as an 'ecomuseum'. What serves as its grounds is the conviction that a museum should not focus exclusively on the collections and building, but on consolidating identity through strengthening cooperation with the local community. Criticism was voiced of the concept of museums as an authority in culture, promoted by e.g. curators' activities, this possibly consolidating the split into the elitist and mass public, the civilizing and the civilized.³⁴ Additionally, museum exhibitions were analysed; they are the place of tensions and choices, not merely of aesthetical nature, but also political and ideological, which has an essential impact on the interpretation of the past and future.³⁵ As pointed to by Andrzej Szczerski, the radical claims of the 'New Museology' could not become an alternative to state institutions.³⁶ Reflection on the social and political role of museums led to shifting the balance in the relations between the institution and its public so as to strengthen the position of the latter thanks to the public's commitment to the process of creating the first. Thus, from the perspective of the 'New Museology' a museum can become a representative of varied groups of the public not so much imposing their vision of the world, but interpreting and explaining it. The basis of an 'ecomuseum' is to be found in care for the local heritage, also natural, and contribution of the community to shaping museum policy, this contribution based on the most important features of the 'traditional' museum understood as space for education, place to collect, preserve, and make available tangible and intangible heritage.

An example of such can be seen in the *Écomusée du fier monde* in Montreal.³⁷ Its first display dedicated to the heritage of the city district was launched in 1981, and received great feedback from its residents who shared their memories of and information on the Centre-Sud. The collections gathered owing to this commitment encompassed tangible heritage (objects, photographs, documents) and intangible heritage (information acquired from memories, know-how, and tradition). Thanks to this it was possible to create the narrative which in a broader context included stories close and known to public members from their own experience. The shortening of the distance between the museum and the community that created it was based on the invitation extended to those groups which had remained marginalized in the district's cultural activity; the change was also observed in the language of the displays (information in the first person). Thanks to this the activity of the museum became more flexible and sensitive to the needs of the local community.³⁸

Apart from France and Canada, the 'New Museology' is also powerful in the countries of Iberian roots, this particularly visible in South America.³⁹ For example, since 2005 Brasilia's town of Ouro Preto has been implementing the space 'musealization' project meant to allow to re-interpret

the heritage of the city and region in the social context.⁴⁰ In this particular case, the 'ecomuseum' means many spots within the city space important for the local community, e.g. churches, parks, squares, the gold mine, archaeological and natural zones. They are places of social, artistic, and cultural activities aimed at restoring knowledge of their impact and creators, understanding the role they play in the contemporary city, as well as at consolidating the identity through the knowledge of and respect for the past. The transfer of museums from the function of the 'culture lord' to the role of one of many institutions co-responsible for shaping the cultural heritage of a region constitutes an element essential for creating space for the exchange of knowledge and cooperation in the spirit of the 'New Museology'.

Similar assumptions could be found at the basis of the participatory museum context. Its proponent Nina Simon points to the role museums play in society: this is both presenting high-quality contents and the possibility to co-create them by the public. *The success of the participatory model is designing the co-participation in the way that allows to both effectively and attractively present the content created by the public. This is where the fundamental change lies.*⁴² The idea has been successfully implemented in the e.g. Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History in California, US, Simon has been running since 2011. The essential policy shift of the Museum consisted in adjusting standard solutions, e.g. visual information, display space, educational proposals, to the needs and expectations of the public, and in emphasizing their participation in raising the institution and identification with the museum. The 'Anything Goes' Museum Project run by the National Museums in Warsaw (2016) curated by 62 children falls perfectly within the trend. The mounting of the Exhibition demonstrated *how big a role in establishing the museum-visitor relation should be played by creating space facilitating the establishing of a personal emotional bond with the work.*⁴³ It goes without saying that the deepening of the institution-public relation provides an opportunity to enrich the experience, boosts satisfaction and capacity to assimilate the knowledge the museum conveys, this working for both the public and the institution's staff. Such activities are not possible without a deeper reflection on the museum essence, not merely on a global scale, but also, or maybe first of all, on a local and individual one.⁴⁴

The late 1960s were decisive also for artistic museums. One of the greatest protests against institutional practices was connected with New York's prestigious Museum of Modern Art. Established in 1969, the movement called Art Workers' Coalition (AWC) demanded, first of all, change in the display policy, pointing to the need to align collecting practices with artistic realities, pointing to minority discrimination and to favouring mainstream artists, as well as to the unsettled copyright of the works in the Museum's collections.⁴⁵ Analogical problems pestered the majority of the institutions, regardless of whether they operated in capitalist or communist countries. The latter zone, for obvious reasons, was characterized by an essentially different dynamics of the reforms.⁴⁶

It was already then that one of the most important reflection areas on the activity of art museums were curators' and display practices, crucial for shaping the image

and strategy of art museums, criticized within the context of the 'New Museology'.⁴⁷ Opening the discourse by museums and making it more flexible consisted in the inclusion in the display process of artists (e.g. through curator projects, artists in residence) and the public, and also going outside the institution's walls (open museum).⁴⁸ The changes in an art museums are determined also by a certain transgression of contemporary artistic activities occurring in all: social, political, and technological contexts. Thanks to this museum of art, particularly of contemporary art, within certain areas of their activity approximate 'museum laboratories' and the venue of events proposed by the Soviet Avant-garde.⁴⁹

For a long time museum modernization was identified with a more extensive use of new technologies and the change in the display narrative in such a way so as to expose so-called small narratives from within a broader context.⁵⁰ Since the 1990s these solutions have been particularly eagerly used by history museums of clear though developed narrative axis. The instances of such institutions are known well enough, so there is no need to enumerate them. It goes without saying that the popularity of such multimedia displays had been preceded by the success of science museums (centres) which drastically changed the till-then manner of conveying knowledge. However, more and more often the reflection on a museum collection and its display leads to a different look on the objects that create it. It is illustrated by the 'turn towards things', drawing inspiration from 'new materialism' in the humanities.⁵¹

The currently occurring re-interpretation of a museum object unquestionably derives from the experience of ethnographic museums whose richness and burden at the same time are objects acquired beginning as of the 18th century in the course of missions, expeditions, explorations, and also often looting scientific expeditions. In many situations a public display of worshipped objects or specimens of a particular importance for the culture of a given community may contradict the community's system of values, which questions the concept of Western progressive humanism. This may be an appropriate point to mention The Museum of World Culture in Gothenburg, created around the collections of the Swedish Academy of Sciences, and later of the ethnographic section of the Museum of Natural History (1900).⁵² The changes occurring in Swedish museology since the 1970s, supported by legislative activities of the state, have been meant to activate and expand the activities of the institution through increased participation of society and a complex documentation of the heritage.⁵³ One of the steps harmonizing with the process of a gradual 'decolonization' of the ethnographic collections was the establishment of The Museum of World Culture (1999) meant to show the heritage in a broader than earlier context, with transparency and with respect for its diversity.⁵⁴ One of the consequences of such a policy was the return in 2006 of the G'psgolox totem pole to the Haisla people; the totem had disappeared from a village in British Columbia in 1929, and remained in the collection of the Swedish museum over that time.⁵⁵ The attempt to re-interpret heritage does not apply only to the post-colonial collections, this testified to, for example, by the activity of The Seweryn Udziela Museum of Ethnography in Cracow, which thanks to the conducted research proposes a new approach to the Siberian collection it owns.⁵⁶

A similarly serious ethical problem is connected with the institutions which boast human and animal specimens in their collection. The following is stated in the Code of Ethics for Natural History Museums adopted in 2013 with regard to human remains: *Where extant representatives of the cultural groups exist, any display, representation, research and /or deaccession must be done in full consultation with the groups involved. Meanwhile: Animal remains should be displayed with respect and dignity regardless of the species or its origins.*⁵⁷ Today museums no longer collect animal skins, and the displayed collections testify to the earlier collecting activity of natural history museums. Simultaneously, it is precisely these taxidermic specimens that are the most vulnerable to destruction, not merely due to biological damage, but their decreasing visual attractiveness or negative interpretation by the public or the museums themselves. The moral dilemma resulting from the means of acquiring the specimens, and, in a larger picture, from the exploitation of natural resources, casts a shadow on the collection evaluation, however undeniably some of the specimens boast exceptional importance for research into rare or extinct species.⁵⁸

The above-mentioned aspects of the changes occurring in contemporary museology, positive in their majority, do not mean that the process is entirely free of negative aspects. In many a case these reflections on museums and transformations are merely superficial, short-term; the participatory aspect is limited merely to running the social media, while political questions prove decisive not only for the direction of a given institution's development, but also for its factual quality. Objections are raised in the case of excessive commercialization, identifying a museum with an entertainment venue, or mercenary fashion of treating national heritage, this best testified to by the bitter comments of the French museologist Jean Clair announcing the crisis of museums.⁵⁹ Justified doubts are raised by new exhibition concepts which often – declaring a multi-threaded and open discourse – propose a distorted image of reality.⁶⁰ What can astound are practices boosting visitors' artificial emotions based on 'universal', yet non-extant 'facts', questioning transparency and the truth that should be the foundation of museums.⁶¹ Mention also has to be made of multimedia displays whose maintenance cost often exceeds the museum's budget, while their scale is in disproportion to the public's needs. Marginal to the debate are also environmental issues of running the institution which, while promoting socially responsible attitudes, leaves a much higher carbon footprint than necessary. All these are obviously merely the tip of the iceberg created by problems and tensions resulting from the introduced changes and those being introduced.⁶² These are challenges far more serious, since they require more than just merely copying of the already existing ideas, and working out such solutions that remain in line with a given museum and the communities that create it.

The above choice of topics related to contemporary museums only signals the multi-layered structure of the problem. A museum is a reflection, but also a fragment of the changing world, and like itself it faces new, often unexpected challenges. In many cases criticism of museums does not do justice to the institution which, having been the tool of colonization, has during its existence been assimilated,

transformed, and is being used as one of the elements of building and consolidating identity. At the same time, it is precisely the resistance to the traditional structure and schemes that allows to expose the multi-aspect character of a museum and the potential to overcome the functions that are imposed on it. The so-far and still valid museum

definition, drawing from the 'European' tradition unquestionably requires reflection. It is worth remembering, though, that a museum is a 'brilliant experiment', a place which thanks to people's curiosity about themselves and the world should tend memory, tangible and intangible heritage, in a varied manner, both traditional and visionary.

Abstract: The debate on the museum definition undertaken at the 2019 Kyoto ICOM General Conference points to the role played contemporarily by museums and the expectations they have to meet. It also results as a consequence of changes happening in museums beginning as of the 19th century until today. Extremely important processes took place in the past century. Initially, the changes covered the museum operating methods, mainly within museum education and display, however, they also had an impact on the status of objects in museum collections in the context of artistic and ethnographic collections. One of the most interesting ideas for museum's redefinition was that proposed in the 1st half of the 20th c. in the formula of Museums of Artistic Culture. However, the departure from the traditionally conceived museum towards a 'laboratory of modernity' proposed by the Russian Avant-garde was still too revolutionary for its times. Beginning as of the 1960s, next to the reflection on museums' operating modes, there increased the emphasis

on the role they played and the one they should play in modern society. It was phenomena of political, social, or economic character that had a direct impact on the transformation of the shape of museums, these phenomena appearing under the banners of globalization, liberalization, democratization, glocalization. Criticism of museums and their up-to-then praxes drew attention to the essential character of the relation between the institution and its public. The turn towards society allowed for such formats to appear as an ecomuseum, participatory museum, open museum. The solutions derived from the New Museology not only point to the necessity to move the level of the relationship between museum and society, but first and foremost to reflect on museum's activity which is assumed to create an institution maximally transparent and ethical. It is for various reasons that not all the solutions proposed by museums meet the criteria. Museums continue to face numerous challenges, yet they boast potential to face them.

Keywords: museum, new museology, participatory museum, colonialism, museum education, new museum definition

Endnotes

- ¹ It read: *The word 'museum' includes all collections open to public, of artistic, technical, scientific, historical or archeological material, including zoos and botanical gardens, but excluding libraries, except in so far as they maintain permanent exhibition rooms*, quoted after: M. Borusiewicz, *Nauka czy rozrywka? Nowa muzeologia w europejskich definicjach muzeum* [Education or Entertainment? The New Museology in the European Museum Definitions], Universitas, Kraków 2012, p. 226. In this publication the author traced and analysed changes in the museum definition in the 20th century. There is also extensive literature on the topic; see also: D. Folga-Januszewska, *Dzieje pojęcia muzeum i problemy współczesne – wprowadzenie do dyskusji nad nową definicją muzeum ICOM* [History of the Museum Concept and Contemporary Challenges: Introduction into the Debate on the New ICOM Museum Definition] published in this issue of the 'Muzealnictwo' Annual; in Annex 2: Evolution of ICOM Museum Definition in 1946–2007 all the ICOM museum definitions from the given period in the English version can be found.
- ² Naturally, that choice is subjective and does not aspire to setting out primary tendencies. My goal is to expose some crucial points and the intersection of certain tendencies that affect the contemporary museum image.
- ³ D. Preziosi, *Brain of the Earth's Body. Art, Museum, and the Phantasm of Modernity* (1996), K. Kolenda (przeł.), w: *Display. Strategie wystawiania*, M. Hussakowska, E.M. Tatar (red.), Universitas, Kraków 2012, s. 21.
- ⁴ Preziosi also emphasizes that the new museum institution has become the place of displaying what one can force the subjects to desire as their patrimony: the place of inspiring, introducing and placing socio-historical longing of all kinds of desires. D. Preziosi, *Brain of the Earth's Body...*
- ⁵ It is, in turn, the consequence of an open formula of the collection; its shape resulting from the collecting strategy, objects that are in it, the place and context in which it happens to operate. As long as the collection is developed (regardless of the manner and dynamics), it is dynamic and open.
- ⁶ Regrettably, in Poland the debate on the political commitment of museums in majority of cases is limited merely to the current issues, overlooking the historical causes of this kind of relations. Who knows, maybe a larger social awareness of these relations could help search a (difficult) consensus between museums and politics. The major publications on the topic are as follows: E. Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*, Routledge, London 1992; T. Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum. History, Theory, Politics*, Routledge, London, New York 1995.
- ⁷ Among the researchers two views dominate: the first that points to the ancient beginning of the museum, the second that places its institutional and ideological foundations in the 18th c. The 'Enlightenment museum' refers to the latter.
- ⁸ In German museology a big role was played by the *Landesmuseum* and *Heimatmuseum* concepts which can be explained in a simplified manner as the 'museum of native land'. It was connected with the nationalism being born in the 19th century, to which also the Mannheim Conference made reference. On *Landesmuseum* see L. Meijer-van Mensch, P. van Mensch, *From Disciplinary Control to Co-creation – Collecting and the Development of Museums as Praxis in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century*, in: S. Pettersson, M. Hagedorn-Saupe, T. Jyrkkö, A. Weij, *Encouraging Collections Mobility – a Way Forward for Museums in Europe*, Finnish National Gallery, Helsinki 2010, pp. 33-53.

- ⁹ The recommendation was for the number of participants not to exceed 20, only the most interesting objects were spoken of during the tour, while the class level was adjusted to the awareness of the public. Since curators are quite busy with other responsibilities, such classes could also be run by appropriately trained teachers, R. von Erdberg, *Führungen durch Museen*, in: *Die Museen als Volksbildungsstätten*: Ergebnisse der 12. Konferenz der Centralstelle für Arbeiter-Wohlfahrtseinrichtungen, Carl Henmanns Verlag, Berlin 1904, pp. 147-53.
- ¹⁰ The Conference was attended mainly by museologists from the German Empire, Austria-Hungary, the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, the United Kingdom. A report from the Conference was published e.g. in the journals: 'International Studio' (American) and the 'Museums Journal' (British). The Polish circles were informed about the topics tackled at the Conference by Zenon Przesmycki Miriam in a series of articles published in 'Nowa Gazeta' in 1908, later reprinted in the volume Z. Przesmycki Miriam, *Pro arte: uwagi o sztuce i kulturze: nieco z obyczajów, teatry, kabarety, muzyka, literatura, sztuki plastyczne* [Pro Arte: Remarks on Art and Culture. On Customs, Theatres, Cabarets, Music, Literature, Fine Arts], Warszawa 1914, pp. 510-30, 538-45.
- ¹¹ Just to illustrate this point, in the research into display perception the model visitor was an intelligent man with good eye-sight, B.I. Giles, *Museum Fatigue*, 'The Scientific Monthly' 1916, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 62.
- ¹² This phenomenon was particularly pointed to in the United States, see G.E. Hein, *Progressive Education and Museum Education: Anna Billings Gallup and Louise Connolly*, 'The Journal of Museum Education' 2006, Vol. 31, No. 3, *The Professional Relevance of Museum Educators: Perspectives from the Field*, pp. 161-73.
- ¹³ Debates on museum displays started in the second half of the 19th century. Attempts to alter displays were undertaken by German museologists, first of all Wilhelm von Bode, later Hugo von Tschudi: A. Joachimides, *Die Museumsreformbewegung in Deutschland und die Entstehung des modern Museums 1880-1940*, Verlag der Kunst, Dresden 2001. On displays in artistic museums: C. Klonek, *Spaces of Experience: Art Gallery Interiors from 1800 to 2000*, New Heaven, Yale University Press, London 2009; A.M. Staniszewski, *The Power of Display. A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art*, MIT Press, Cambridge, London 1998. In Polish literature the question has not been sufficiently tackled.
- ¹⁴ This term echoes the book by Germain Bazin, *Le Temps des Musées*, Desoer, Liège 1967, describing the increasing importance of museums in Western Europe in the 19th century.
- ¹⁵ D. Poulot, *Musée, nation, patrimoine, 1789-1815*, Editions Gellimard, Paris 1997.
- ¹⁶ It began with the formation of art history which defined the space, see: F. Haskell, *Rediscoveries in Art: Some Aspects of Taste, Fashion and Collecting in England and France*, Cornell University Press, New York 1976.
- ¹⁷ This obviously is a big simplification; on the change of the paradigm of art in the context of collecting, see: T.F. de Rosset, *Czy kolekcja sztuki musi być artystyczna?* [Can an Art Collection be Artistic?], 'Acta Universitatis Nicolai Copernici. Zabytkoznawstwo i Konserwatorstwo' 2012, No. 43, pp. 41-54; *Idem, Kolekcja artystyczna - geneza, rozkwit, kryzys* [An Artistic Collection: Genesis, Heyday, Crisis], 'Acta Universitatis Nicolai Copernici. Zabytkoznawstwo i Konserwatorstwo' 2014, No. 45, pp. 253-85.
- ¹⁸ You can be a Museum, or you can be modern, but you can't be both. Quoted after: J.B. Hightower, *Foreword*, in: *Four Americans in Paris: The Collections of Gertrude Stein and Her Family*, I. Gordon (ed.), MoMA, New York 1970, p. 8.
- ¹⁹ On Constructivist museums in Soviet Russia see, e.g. A. Turowski, *Muzea Kultury Artystycznej* [Museums of Artistic Culture], 'Artium Questiones' 1983, No. 2, pp. 89-103; *Idem, Muzeum - instytucja awangardy* [Museum: an Avant-garde Institution] (1992), in: *Idem, Awangardowe marginesy* [Avant-garde Margins], IK, Warszawa 1998, pp. 153-66; *Idem, The Contemporary Museum is a Laboratory of Knowledge: The Origins of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Russia*, in: *From Museum Critique to the Critical Museum*, K. Murawska-Muthesius, P. Piotrowski (ed.), Routledge, London, New York 2015, pp. 37-52.
- ²⁰ J. P. Lorente, *Cathedrals of Urban Modernity: The First Museums of Contemporary Art, 1800-1930*, Ashgate, Aldershot 2000; *Idem, The Museums of Contemporary Art: Notion and Development*, Ashgate, Farnham 2011. Another interesting issue is the relation of modern art and public collections with American politics during WW II, see: S. Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art. Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War* (1983), A. Goldhamer (transl.), University of Chicago Press 1985.
- ²¹ On the relations between ethnography and art, and their impact on ethnographic museums see: J. Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature and Art*.
- ²² *Museographie: Architecture et Amenagement des Musees d'art. Conference Internationale d'Etudes. Madrid 1934*, Office international des musées, Institut international de coopération intellectuelle, 1935, Vol. 2, pp. 425-426. A set of the most important principles and good practices as for collecting and proper conservation of specimens presented in full light the multi-faceted character of the museum.
- ²³ Actually, the building of the Musée de l'Homme in Paris was raised in the place of the Trocadéro Museum demolished in 1935. Interestingly, the name 'ethnographic museum' underwent its evolution; currently the term 'the museum of world cultures' is more often used.
- ²⁴ J. Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture...*, p. 160.
- ²⁵ These topics are not as yet well elaborated. One of the more interesting articles within this domain is the paper by Diana Błońska dedicated to the National Museum in Cracow: D. Błońska, *W obliczu kataklizmu. Zabezpieczenie zbiorów Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie przed pierwszą i drugą wojną światową* [In the Face of Calamity. Protection of the Collections of the National Museum in Cracow before WW I and II], 'Dzieje Najnowsze' 2017, Annual Vol. XLIX, No. 1, pp. 27-53; see also: A. Bertinet, *Évacuer le musée, entre sauvegarde du patrimoine et histoire du goût, 1870-1940*, in: *Modèles et modalités de la transmission culturelle*, J.-P. Garric (dir.), Création Series, 'Arts et Patrimoines' 2019, No. 2, pp. 9-40.
- ²⁶ *No one can deny that museums have powers which are of the utmost importance in any war of ideologies - T. Low, What Is a Museum?* (1942), in: *Reinventing the Museum: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on the Paradigm Shift*, G. Anderson (ed.), AltaMira Press, Lanham 2004, p. 30.
- ²⁷ Its predecessor had been the International Museums Office at the League of Nation founded in 1926; see: D. Folga-Januszewska, *Kongresy muzeów i muzealników* [Congresses of Museums and Museum Professionals], 'Muzealnictwo' 2015, No. 56, pp. 36-40. Initially, ICOM sessions were participated by: Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States; the following countries expressed their support for the idea: Argentina, Chile, China, Egypt, Finland, Greece, Haiti, India, Nicaragua, Peru, the Philippines, South Africa, and Turkey. ICOM was founded at the instigation of Chauncey Jerome Hamlin, President of the Board of the Science Museum in Buffalo. On ICOM history see: S.A. Baghli, P. Boylan, Y. Herreman, *History of ICOM (1946-1996)*, International Council of Museums, Paris 1998, https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/History_of_ICOM_1946-1996_-2.pdf [Accessed: 20 April 2020].
- ²⁸ Its beginnings are connected with the first geographical discoveries, then colonization, one of whose effects was the foundation of museums. The third globalization stage occurred after 1945, and had an economic, political, and cultural impact.

- ²⁹ Obviously this is a far-reaching simplification meant to serve exclusively the emphasis of the scale of the occurring processes. New technology constitutes an essential challenge to contemporary reality, museums included. The issue has been widely debated over, that is why it has not been developed in the present paper. See: R. Kluszczyński, *Nowe media w przestrzeniach muzeum* [New Media in Museum Spaces], in: *Muzeum sztuki. Od Luwru do Bilbao* [Art Museum. From the Louvre to Bilbao], M. Popczyk (ed.), Muzeum Śląskie, Katowice 2006, pp. 59-66; L. Tallon, K. Walker, *Digital Technologies and the Museum Experience: Handheld Guides and Other Media*, AltaMira Press, Lanham 2008; R.I.F. Vaz, P.O. Fernandes, A.C.R. Veiga, *Interactive Technologies in Museums: How Digital Installations and Media Are Enhancing the Visitors' Experience*, in: *Handbook of Research on Technological Developments for Cultural Heritage and eTourism Applications*, J.M.F. Rodrigues, C.M.Q. Ramos, P.J.S. Cardoso, C. Henriques (ed.), IGI Global, Hershey 2018, pp. 30-53.
- ³⁰ It was for the first time in 1953 that the situation in India's museology was discussed at the ICOM Conference; in relation to the decolonization of Africa in later years the problems of museum objects' conservation in tropical countries (1962) and museology there (1965) were discussed.
- ³¹ The issue relates first of all to historic architecture, see: K. Schatt-Babińska, *Europocentryczne i dalekowschodnie spojrzenie na wartość autentyczności zabytku – dokument z Nara jako próba pogodzenia odmiennych poglądów* [Europe-Focused and Far-Eastern View on the Authenticity of a Historic Monument: the Nara Document as an Attempt at Reconciling Different Views], 'Gdańskie Studia Azji Wschodniej' 2016, No. 10, pp. 28-40.
- ³² The discussed issues concerned e.g. the questions of national delegations authorized by state authorities and the status of ICOM members some of whom did not have the right to vote. Granting of the right to vote to all ICOM members and amendments to the Statute were an important step towards further changes in ICOM policy, P. Boylan, Y. Herreman, *History of ICOM...*, pp. 25-6.
- ³³ Hugues de Varine initiated the 'New Museology', and Georges Henri Riviere, one of the participants of the Dakar-Djibouti Mission authored the 'ecomuseum' concept. Both concepts were presented during the ICOM Conference in France in 1971.
- ³⁴ V. McCalla, C. Gray, *Museums and the 'new museology': theory, practice, and organisational change*, 'Museum Management and Curatorship' 2013, Vol. 29, No. 1, p. 2. The text partially available at: <https://evmuseography.wordpress.com/2015/01/24/new-museology-concepts/>
- ³⁵ The issue is tackled in the paper by e.g. Peter Vergo, see: P. Vergo, *The reticent object*, in: *The New Museology*, P. Vergo (ed.), Reaktion Books, London 1989.
- ³⁶ A. Szczepski, *Kontekst, edukacja, publiczność – muzeum z perspektywy „Nowej muzeologii”* [Context, Education, Public: Museum from the Perspective of the 'New Museology'], in: *Muzeum sztuki. Antologia...* [Museum of Art. Anthology...], p. 339. On this note let us recall the claims formulated by the circles of museum professionals from East Central Europe, particularly from the Czech Republic, who pointed to the social dimension of the institution. An interesting example of this kind of activity may be seen in the Lodz 'open museum', see: R. Stanisławski, *Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi – „muzeum otwarte”* [Museum of Art in Lodz: 'Open Museum'] (1971), in: *Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi. Monografia* [Museum of Art in Lodz. Monograph], Vol. 1, A. Jach, K. Słoboda, J. Sokołowska, M. Ziółkowska (ed.), MS, Łódź 2015, pp. 474-6; *Ibid.*, *Muzeum dla społeczeństwa* [Museum for Society] (1974), in: *Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi...*, *ibid.*, pp. 479-81.
- ³⁷ In 1970, in one of the infamous districts of Montreal (Centre-Sud) an organization associating its residents: Les Habitations communautaires du Centre-Sud de Montréal was formed; its goal was to enhance the quality of life of the district's residents and their security. The name of the museum active in the neighbourhood emphasized the institution's positive message, as explained by one of the residents: *we're treated like the third world [tiers monde] but we have our pride (are members of the fier monde)!*, quoted after R. Binette, *The Concept of Ecomuseum Collection*, in: *Ecomuseums and Cultural Landscapes. State of the Art. And Future Prospects*, R. Riva et al. (ed.), Maggioli Editore, Santarcangelo di Romagna 2017, p. 72.
- ³⁸ R. Binette, *The Concept of Ecomuseum...*, pp. 74-7.
- ³⁹ The commitment of the local community allows us to re-interpret the history of places and people, taking into consideration the story of the indigenous peoples, European colonizers, slaves from Africa, economic migrants from Asia and Europe at the turn of the 20th century, as well as the individuals arriving after WW II.
- ⁴⁰ The term 'musealisation' refers to the growing number of museums in Western Europe, the historical policy (Kulturkampf), and the culture of memory and of the past, which has been particularly popular since the 1980s; see: A. Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*, Routledge, New York, London 2010, pp. 25-35. In this context it is however the question of the reinterpretation of space in such a way so as to read the values whose carriers are methods applied by e.g. museums.
- ⁴¹ Y. Mattos et al., *Serra de Ouro Preto: Multiple Landscape Designed by Nature, Culture, and Heritage*, in: *Ecomuseums and Cultural Landscapes...*, pp. 89-94.
- ⁴² N. Simon, *Muzeum partycypacyjne* [The Participatory Museum], *Laboratorium muzeum. Społeczność* [Laboratory Museum. Community], A. Banaś, A. Janus (ed.), Muzeum Warszawy, Warszawa 2015, p. 23.
- ⁴³ A. Knapiek, *W Muzeum wszystko wolno, czyli pięć zmysłów partycypacji* [Anything Goes Museum or the Five Senses of Participation], 'Muzealnictwo' 2016, No. 57, pp. 142-3.
- ⁴⁴ Redefinition of the museum profile should take place on the basis of the institution's potential (e.g. collections, building, museum staff), its public (e.g. their commitment, knowledge, varied experience, and prospects), as well as the space in which they function (e.g. history, cultural heritage, nature). See: N. Simon, *The Participatory Museum*, <http://www.participatorymuseum.org>.
- ⁴⁵ On the AWC movement and the claims formulated by the artists, see: M. Elligott, *From the Archives: Faith Ringgold, the Art Workers Coalition, and the Fight for Inclusion at The Museum of Modern Art*, Inside/out, a MoMA/MoMA PS1 blog, https://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2016/07/29/from-the-archives-faith-ringgold-the-art-workers-coalition-and-the-fight-for-inclusion-at-the-museum-of-modern-art/, [Accessed: 10 May 2020]. In many cases artistic actions questioning museums used their own tools and schemes, see: J. Putnam, *Art and Artifact: The Museum as Medium*, Thames & Hudson, New York 2001.
- ⁴⁶ The issue was tackled by Piotr Piotrowski in the context of the National Museum in Warsaw, see: P. Piotrowski, *Muzeum krytyczne* [Critical Museum], Rebis, Poznań 2011.
- ⁴⁷ The reflection on art collecting was much less frequent, limited to expanding the structure with additional sections – photography, new media, design. One of the most interesting concepts for the archiving of artistic activities was the Hungarian Artpool, ob. *Artpool Art Research Center in Budapest and the unrealized concept of the Museum of Current Art* of Jerzy Ludwiński, see *Artpool: the experimental art archive of East-Central Europe; history of an active archive for producing, networking, curating and researching art since 1970*, G. Galántai, J. Klaniczay (ed.), Artpool, Budapest 2013; J. Ludwiński, *The Museum of Current Art in Wrocław* (general concept) (1966), in: *ibid.*, *Epoka blue*, J. Hanusek (ed.), Otwarta Pracownia, Kraków 2003, pp. 89-97; *ibid.*, *Artistic Research Center* (1971), *ibid.*, pp. 146-150.

- ⁴⁸ The issues related to contemporary challenges faced by art museums are well illustrated e.g. in the books *Muzeum Sztuki. Antologia* (2006) and *Muzeum sztuki. Od Luwru do Bilbao* (2006). On curatorship praxis in Polish museology see: Zawód: *kurator* [Profession: Curator], A. Czaban, M. Kosińska (ed.), Galeria Miejska Arsenal, Poznań 2014.
- ⁴⁹ As has been justly pointed to by the British art critic and art historian Claire Bishop: *The idea that artists might help us glimpse the contours of a project for rethinking our world is surely one of the reasons why contemporary art, despite its near total imbrication in the market, continues to rouse such passionate interest and concern* – C. Bishop, *Radical Museology or, What's 'Contemporary' in Museums of Contemporary Art?*, Koenig Book, London 2014, p. 23.
- ⁵⁰ The concept of 'small narratives' appeared as early as in the first half of the 20th century in regional and urban museums, boosting their popularity thanks to the so-called narrative museums, e.g. the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC (1993).
- ⁵¹ An example of such an approach can be found in e.g. 'The Things of Warsaw' Exhibition at the Muzeum Warszawy (Museum of Warsaw) (2017), see: *Muzeum rzeczy. Rozmowa z Magdaleną Wróblewską* [Museum of Things. Talking to Magdalena Wróblewska], interview by Adam Mazur, 'Szum', <https://magazynszum.pl/muzeum-rzeczy-rozmowa-z-magdalena-wroblewska/> [Accessed: 11 May 2020].
- ⁵² The collection encompasses objects brought by James Cook from his expeditions, but the core is made up of the collections acquired during evangelical and trade missions to Swedish colonies in Africa, Asia, and Northern America.
- ⁵³ M. Biörnstad, *Swedish museums: a brief history*, 'Museum International' 1988, No. 4, p. 192.
- ⁵⁴ J. Sandahl, *The Interpretation of Cultural Policy, By and For Museums: a museum as an embodiment of cultural policies?*, 'Museum International' 2006, No. 232, p. 30; the Swedish collection, similarly as that of the Musée de l'Homme encompasses exclusively objects representing non-European cultures. The goal of the Museum of World Culture is thus the incorporation of the collected heritage into social space, yet not through its assimilation, but active dialogue. The author of the Museum's programme and Director in 2001-2006 was Jette Sandahl, currently heading the ICOM standing committee for Museum Definition.
- ⁵⁵ The Haisla people who in 1992 requested the return of the totem pole, made its replica for the Swedish collection. On ethnographic museums in the 20th century and the return of museum objects, see: M. Bouquet, *Museums. A Visual Anthropology*, Berg, London, New York 2012.
- ⁵⁶ Ethnographic Museum, Research Projects tab, <https://etnomuzeum.eu/projekty-badawcze/lista> [Accessed: 10 May 2020].
- ⁵⁷ ICOM Code of Ethics for Natural History Museums, Section 1D, Section 2.1.D https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/nathcode_ethics_en.pdf. The text does not apply directly to martyrology museums meant to commemorate crime victims, unequivocally implying respect for their remains.
- ⁵⁸ R. Poliquin, *The matter and meaning of museum taxidermy*, 'Museum and Society' 2008, No. 6(2), pp. 123-34. Reflection on the role of an animal in a museum display covers not only taxidermic specimens, but all the animal-derived exhibits, while in the case of art museums, the use of animals in artistic practices.
- ⁵⁹ *A museum-forum, open museum. So much has been written about those blurred but also generous formulas? Open like a wound susceptible to infection? Like a city occupied by the army?* – J. Clair, *Kryzys muzeów. Globalizacja kultury*, [Museum Crisis. Globalization of Culture, J.M. Kloczowski (transl.), słowo /obraz terytoria, Gdańsk 2009, p. 31. The book was written in an act of protest against the deal between the Louvre executives and the Emir of Abu Dhabi to make the French collection available to the Louvre Abu Dhabi.
- ⁶⁰ See: A. Zięba, *Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. Historicism and (anti) multimedia*, 'Muzealnictwo' 2016, No. 57, pp. 249-276.
- ⁶¹ An example here can be found in the emotionally stirring 'Daniel's Story' presented at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC: *the story of one boy, fictional but based on extensive research*, L. Bedford, *The Art of Museum Exhibitions: How Story and Imagination Create Aesthetic Experiences*, Routledge, Walnut Creek 2014, pp. 57, 60.
- ⁶² Each museum, apart from the 'universal' challenges, also faces 'its own' difficulties, stemming from its activity profile, location, time, and people who contribute to creating it. It is impossible to enumerate them all, the majority, however, stem from the specificity of the country in which the museum operates, see: J. Sandahl, *Polityka milczenia? Muzea jako autoportrety i zwierciadła społeczeństw* [Reticence Policy? Museums as Society's Self-Portraits and Mirrors], in: *Laboratorium muzeum. Społeczność...*, pp. 39-40.

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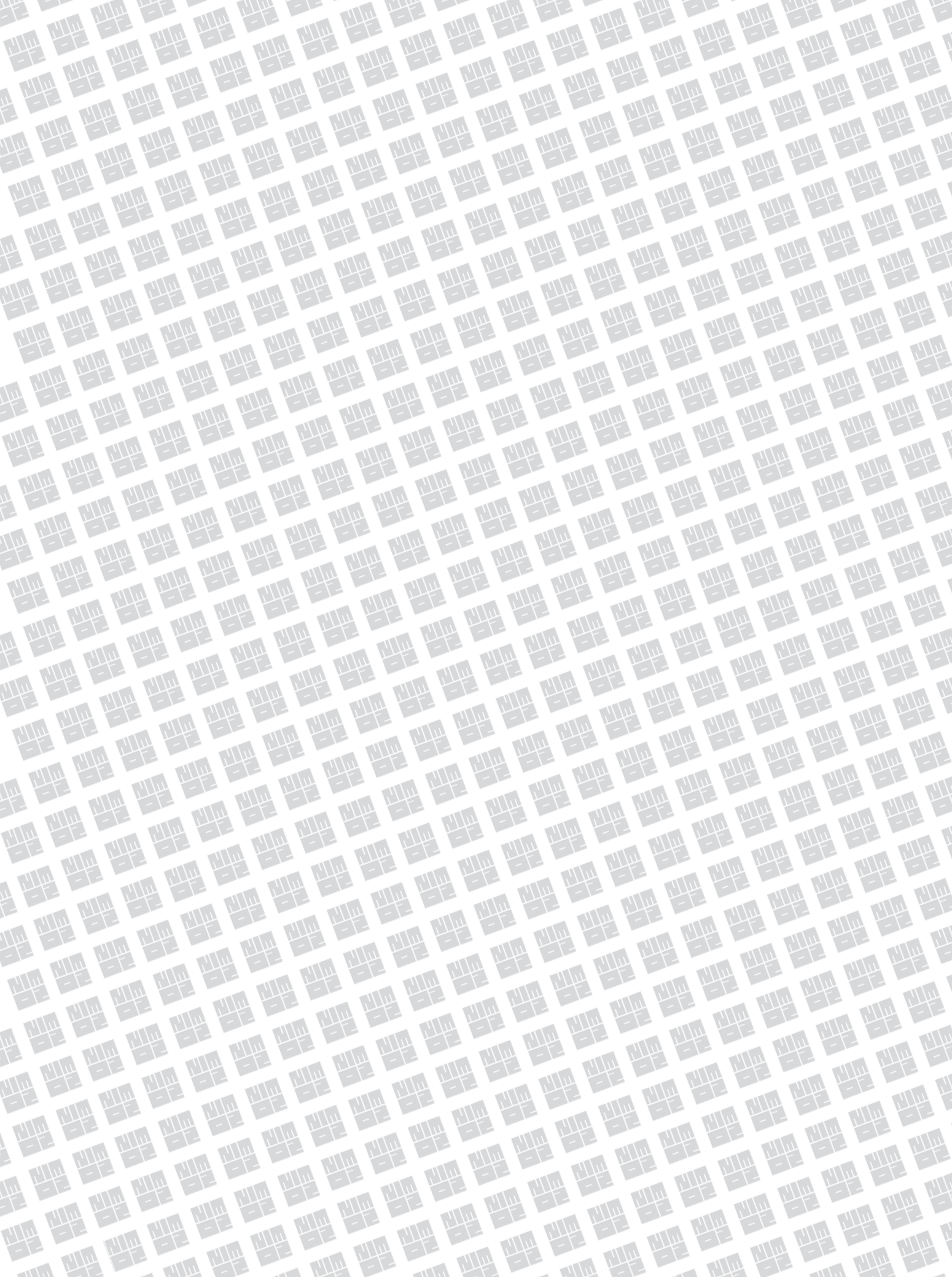
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MUSEUMS IN THE WORLD WITHOUT THE FUTURE

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Krzysztof Pomian, who used to repeat that museums face the future, has recently observed symptoms of the harbinger of the end of the 'museum era'. It is heralded by the pandemic and by, as he calls it, 'environmental ideology'.¹ The first questioned the economic model of development which made large museums even larger. The second, much more overwhelming, challenged the optimistic vision of the future inherent in museums' basic assumptions. The existence of museums is, after all, connected with the belief in the possibility to transfer the heritage of the past to the future. Not only do museums convince us that there will be a certain future, but that it will be in a sense similar to the present, and that in that future people will be partly interested in what we today find exciting. Therefore, if the future as such is uncertain, since climate change will transform life on Earth in the manner we are unable to currently predict, museums will lose their raison d'être that we know today. Thus, the apocalyptic vision of the disaster, the climate catastrophe, question the very idea of the museum as an institution.²

I am quoting the opinion of the world-renown expert in museum history and museology, since it can be regarded as symptomatic of today's situation of uncertainty. Both sources of threat: the pandemic and the 'environmental ideology', essentially challenged his convictions related to the museums' past. Merely several years ago Pomian published an article in *Museology* whose undertone was essentially different.³ Not only did he not observe any threat to museums' future, but even contrary to their frequently forecast death, he could not imagine the world without museums.⁴ He also underlined the phenomena which were to play the key role in the future. Among them he emphasized the continuous increase in the number of museums and visitors caused by the spread of the interest in the past and in one's own culture, as well as in art of other societies; this mainly in China, India, and Brazil, namely in the countries where he

predicted the greatest expansion. He perceived the reasons for that in globalisation, growth of the standard of living in the developing countries, ICT revolution, expansion of international and intercontinental tourism, and in museums' promotional policy.⁵

In the future foreseen by Pomian museums should develop in the world dominated by the principle of capitalist growth, a peculiar 'growthism', organised, as observed by Jason Hickel, in compliance with the imperative of continuous expansion.⁶ Today's Pomian's concerns stem from the aftereffects of the pandemic and of placing the environmental disaster at the central point of the public debate, making it one of the most serious challenges on the global political agenda. They undermined the ideological bases of 'growthism' whose logics had previously constituted the foundations of the optimistic vision of museums.

These predictions lead directly to the questions related to the role of museums in the world which, stimulated by the ideology of growth, is leading directly towards the environmental disaster, or the latter has already occurred; to the questions concerning their identification of priorities in the light of the new academic consensus unambiguously perceiving the dependence between the GDP growth and the intensifying environmental disaster? Are museums able to give up the expansionist operating modus resulting from the development of mass globalized tourism? How serious are they about the appeal addressed to the governments of all countries by over 11.000 scientists worldwide from more than 150 countries demanding to *renounce the pursuit of GDP growth and wealth accumulation for the sake of supporting durability of ecosystems and improvement of life quality?*⁷

Let me concentrate in the first place on the last issue. On how the question of human's impact on the planet's ecosystem has been tackled by museums. I am particularly interested in the exhibitions which relate to the 'Anthropocene'

concept. As observed by the team of Danish female researchers and curators composed of Lotte Isager, Line Vestergaard Knudsen, and Ida Theilade who analysed 41 displays on the Anthropocene held worldwide in 2011–2019, the exhibitions dedicated to that issue, just like *The Anthropocene* organised in Sweden's Göteborg in 2016 by Röda Sten Konsthall, tried to answer the question what it meant to exist in the era dominated by humans.⁸ They also tried to define since when and where human activity has left an indelible trace on the earth, this exemplified e.g., by the *Placing the Golden Spike: Landscapes of the Anthropocene* at INOVA (Institute of Visual Arts) in Milwaukee, USA, in 2015.⁹ Meanwhile, in the 2016 *Mild Apocalypse* Exhibition at the Moesgaard Museum in Aarhus, Denmark, the tackled issue was the impact of climate change on the global political agenda, bearing in mind that the countries of the so-called Global North are to a lesser degree exposed to the most severe anthropogenic changes on the planet, experiencing (for the time being) merely 'mild' consequences of the Anthropocene.¹⁰ The question how to cope with the consequences of climate change has also been seen from the perspective of resources and defensive mechanisms at mankind's disposal. The example can be seen in the *A.N.T.H.R.O.P.O.C.E.N.E* Exhibition mounted in Brussels in 2015.¹¹

Presenting the Anthropocene in the light of those issues was connected with the museums' educational and disseminating role. This resulted to a high degree from the assumption that the public were not familiar with the term, and were often quite sceptical about the fact that it is man who is responsible for climate change on the earth. This was actually confirmed by the study of the public conducted in the course of *The Anthropocene at HKW* Exhibition at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin in 2013 and the *Welcome to the Anthropocene* Exhibition at Munich's Deutsches Museum in 2014.¹²

Furthermore, the Danish scholars observe three general approaches to the Anthropocene. Firstly, in every analysed exhibition the Anthropocene was associated with other concepts and phenomena which covered: man-nature relations, weather and climate change, pollution, industry, mining, fossil fuels, technology and digitizing, urbanization, justice, mobility, nourishment, evolution, etc. This is a characteristic feature of the exhibitions at natural history museums, such as *We are Nature – Living in the Anthropocene* (2017) at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History in Pittsburgh, USA.¹³ Secondly, just like scientific literature, the exhibitions manifest a different approach to the question of the era's birth certificate. Did the Anthropocene begin when the intercontinental trade began? Did it start together with the industrial revolution, or contrariwise, with the beginning of agriculture over 40.000 years ago? Such questions were asked in the above-mentioned *Placing the Golden Spike: Landscapes of the Anthropocene* Exhibition at INOVA.¹⁴ Thirdly, the exhibitions reflect on the museums' role in the Anthropocene and draw attention to the public, their lifestyle, and consumption practices. The *Moving Plants* Exhibition at Denmark's Rønnebæksholm in Næstved in 2017 showed man's position in relation to nature.¹⁵ Meanwhile, the 2016 *Future Perfect – Picturing the Anthropocene* Exhibition at the University Art Museum at Albany University, USA, emphasized that man conflicted with nature speeds up climate

change, the process being fuelled by populism, authoritarianism, ethnic tribalism, this, in turn, pointed to by the *In the Anthropocene* Exhibition (2017) at the Ocula in New Zealand's Wellington, and consumption culture, this emphasized by the *Anthropocene* Exhibition at Australia's Wollongong Art Gallery opened that year.¹⁶ Those exhibitions indirectly accused their public of being co-responsible for the current climate situation, and addressed them as potential initiators of transformation towards sustainable development. They encouraged visitors to control their habits and reflect on their own responsibility.

However, only very few displays specified what these responsibilities and transformations should consist in and who or what should be liable for conducting them. Particularly, very scarce ones emphasized that climate change is the consequence of not only or not so much of people's conduct, but the effect of historically and politically conditioned economic systems. An exception in this trend can be seen in the *Let's Talk About the Weather – Art and Ecology in a Time of Crisis* Exhibition presented in 2016–2018 in Beirut, Lebanon, and at the Guangdong Museum, in China's Guangzhou, since it demonstrated that the Anthropocene was a consequence of post-colonial structures and of capitalism development, not exclusively of human activity. At the same time it posed questions about global inequalities.

The above demonstrates that although museums often do tackle the questions of climate change owing to their educational and dissemination function, they lack a more critical approach. This conclusion can be seen in the reluctance with which concepts like the 'Capitalocene', 'Plantationocene', or 'Racial Capitalocene' are introduced. In the edition of museum exhibitions the notion of the Anthropocene camouflages the fact that it is actions and decisions undertaken by a limited elite composed mainly of white inhabitants of the West that contribute to the globally felt climate crisis. Instead of specifying the perpetrators and causes of the environmental crisis, the majority of exhibitions, as observed by Isager, Knudsen i Theilade, contain the words 'humans', 'humanity', pointing to the universal source of the crisis, and dispersing responsibility by laying blame on everybody.¹⁷

In the light of the conducted analysis and conclusions that can be reached from it it should be stated that museums which undertake the questions of climate change are not courageous enough to introduce critical education revealing the historical sources of the problem. Instead, they attempt at whitewashing the inequalities conditioned ideologically. For this very reasons maybe the challenge that museums face today is to precisely (i.e., taking into account the rooting in the colonial past and the ideology of the growth capitalism) point to the reasons for climate threats. So as to sensitize the public to the necessity to undertake attempts to realistically limit them, fighting not only against the effects, but also by affecting the causes.

The concept of the Anthropocene is not obviously the only topic tackled by museums in the context of climate change. An issue apart is the already-signalled question about the responsibility, also the responsibility of museums or more broadly of the art system for incurring an ecological debt to the future generations. The problems are thus connected with museums' entanglement in global cultural tourism and their involvement in the leisure industry. Both

have an impact on the environment. In the context of heritage institutions the two are important as for their display activity. The latter issue is relevant, since the exhibitions about the Anthropocene inevitably engage museums in a political dispute, in the controversies whether the world is truly facing a climate disaster, and whether it is humans who are responsible for climate change. Hence museums' involvement in communicating issues related to climate change and environmental protection.

However, this said, can museums and other institutions, such as historic and natural heritage sites, cultural centres, galleries, biennials, fairs, and art reviews, which are all an essential factor fuelling global tourism responsible for a huge carbon footprint, and often dependent on it, be a credible source of the attitude change and education aiming at climate preservation? Since aviation and automotive industry developed to become widely popular in the second half of the 20th century, which enhanced people's mobility to an unprecedented extent, also cultural institutions have been benefitting from this trend. In 1950–2019, the number of international trips increased almost sixtyfold: from 25 million¹⁸ to nearly 1.5 billion.¹⁹ The destinations of many leisure trips are prestigious museums, old historic city centres, science and art centres, parks, festivals, overviews, contests, biennials, and art galleries. All these, however, are often dependent on tourism. Lack of tourism badly affects those institutions' finances. This particular symbiosis was clearly revealed during the pandemic and the subsequent lockdowns introduced.

Furthermore, the number of museums and of exhibitions they mount has a major impact on the development of tourism. Over the last 70 years, in Poland alone the number of museums has increased almost 6.5-fold, the number of visits almost 7-fold, and the number of temporary displays has grown almost 28-fold.²⁰ Bearing these figures in mind we must not forget that the public should somehow get to the museums. Their presence implies smaller or bigger carbon footprint which results from generating energy thanks to which voluntary, fast, and cheap trips can happen. The same applies to holding exhibitions. Exhibit transportation is the highest, though not the only environmental cost. Also costs of business trips related to the exhibitions' preparation and production, as well as their layout, catalogues, invitations, posters, brochures need to be taken into account.

The last issue was dedicated the *Sustainable Museum: Art and Environment* Exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art Busan (MOCA Busan), Southern Korea, in 2021.²¹ Concentrating in its assumptions on the relations between art exhibitions and their impact on the environment, the Exhibition made the climate 'challenge' faced by contemporary museums its departure point. It was planned for the Exhibition to display six works by artists from New York. The total weight of the exhibits together with the packaging essential for their transportation amounted to 1.273 kg. New York's JFK Airport and the Incheon International Airport close to Seoul are 11.000 km apart. The air transportation of that load emits 15.98 tons of CO₂ into the atmosphere. When added the road transportation, the total amount of the CO₂ emission reaches over 16 tons. Obviously, one way only. This situation is one of many in the globalized world of art in which art pieces are transported from one continent to another on a daily basis. If transported by sea, the same

load would decrease the emission 40-fold (up to 0.8 tons both ways), even though the distance of over 37.000 km would have to be covered. The point is, however, that in the first case the transportation both ways takes about 15 working days, while 60 in the other. Nonetheless, the Museum opted for the boat transport, and for some works planned to be displayed the decision was made to livestream the pieces located remotely. Furthermore, the layout was essentially minimized: the display panels were left unpainted to facilitate their reuse in the future. The texts present at the Exhibition were hand-written on scrap paper. Neither were there any posters or invitations prepared for the Exhibition. One of its central elements was a heap of waste from previous displays side by side with the art works.

The above MOCA Busan display differed from the before-mentioned exhibitions on the Anthropocene in the sense that the questions of climate change and sustainable development were autothematically approached from the point of view of the procedures consisting in putting up an exhibition. Not only did the display signal the museums' 'ecological challenge', presented as a 'case study' of the transportation of works from New York, but also the catalogue published three months after the Exhibition's closure was dedicated first of all to the analysis of the impact of display procedures on the environment.²² It contains essays explaining the concept of a sustainable museum, critically discussing the impact of artistic output and operations of cultural institutions on the climate. The papers also draw attention to the procedures related to a more effective use of materials and energy. Among them there are strategies applied to the transportation, arrangement of informative and promotional materials aimed at reducing the exploitation of resources and limiting waste produced by exhibitions. Interestingly, as results from the assessment of the Korean National Maritime Museum, in the course of 3–4 months of the duration of an exhibitions, on the surface of 400–500 sq m about 4–5 tons of waste are produced.²³

As a response to the negative impact of museums on climate the MOCA Busan Exhibition proposed, first of all, the reduction of the carbon footprint displays can generate. Although in the 'Eight Practical Strategies' serving the implementation of the 'Manifesto of a Sustainable Museum' constituting its programme creed the challenge raised was the creation of the increasing number of exhibitions and the intercontinental circulation of art works, the main focus were the issues of energy and material consumption. Globalisation and the logics of the capitalist growth, yielding as results excessive production and inequalities, were not questioned, but merely signalled as phenomena which can bring negative consequences to the environment. Finally, the story of the transportation of the works from New York expressed mitigation actions meant to mitigate the effects of the exchange within the global cooperation network. It consisted in replacing the transportation means with a less emissive one. Since after all the sense of the works' display on site as such was not questioned. A similar criticism could be formulated with reference to the very idea of staging a conventional international exhibition. Interestingly, the 'Eight Practical Strategies' justify holding large globalized displays with the range and prestige of such a display format. Meanwhile, in practical terms this implies boost

in tourism and business causing yet more CO₂ emission. Nonetheless, the climate consequences of the reception of exhibitions addressed to the global public were not taken into account. Instead, the focus was on the issues connected with the exhibitions' preparation and mounting.²⁴

Therefore, a question can be asked whether it is the actual strategy change that backs the exhibitions tackling the question of climate change, or a cynical game of appearances? Is it really all about the care and awareness of the threat resulting from over-exploitation and waste of the planet's natural resources and the attempt at limiting them, or is it merely about harmonizing with the fashionable trend (greenwashing, art-washing), with the market strategy aimed at reaching some communication with the public regardless of their age?²⁵ Are museums and other institutions called to protect the heritage authentically convinced that their role and tasks are not only reduced to the care for the past, but also for the future to the extent much broader than that delineated by the horizon of their traditional responsibility towards the future generations consisting in preserving traces of material culture and nature either created or discovered by earlier generations? Finally, should the loss of trust in expansionism lead to the concern about the museums' future as observed by Pomian?

Although these aporias echo the argumentation characteristic of climate deniers, I am far from revealing low instincts with which museums and other heritage institutions engage in the questions of ecology, sustainable development, and preventing climate change, although benefiting from the systems which ruthlessly and short-sightedly exploit the natural resources. Contrariwise, the pro-environmental and pro-climate attitude can forecast a more thorough change in the paradigm of a museum whose twilight is heralded by Pomian, which, however, does not necessarily mean the museums' final end. 'Consistent ecologism' does not necessarily mean 'radical anti-humanism'; neither does it consist in combatting museums up to their eradication, as heralded by the museologist.²⁶ Furthermore, the *Coalition of Museums for Climate Justice*,²⁷ *Museums and Climate Change Network*,²⁸ *Gallery Climate Coalition*,²⁹ *Museums for Climate*,³⁰ *Museum for Future*,³¹ museums and science centres committed to implementing the 'Tokyo Protocol' adopted at the Science Centre World Summit in Tokyo in 2017 to support the sustainable development principles worked out by the United Nations,³² do not necessarily have to be a symptom of a cynical game or an expression of a strategy coinciding with a short-lasting trend. In many a case they express the actual evolution of attitudes and priorities which make museums address global challenges of contemporary societies and states. It seems, however, that they should put more emphasis on education and work with local communities in order to solve these problems rather than participate in the race whose stake is attracting the interest of an increasingly more numerous and preferably international public often actually perfectly aware of the state of the natural environment.

Since it is not subsequent exhibitions, but more educational programmes which express the effectiveness of the use of the potential created by exhibitions, providing a broader engagement framework for a more varied public. Such programmes open space for dialogue on climate change and its causes, allowing to present reliable scientific research results, to publicize and publicly discuss alternative

creative opportunities for the use of new power resources whose search is a symptom of an open approach to innovation, necessity for change, and diversification. The space which has a potential to extend the range of conventional narratives on climate, consisting in promoting behaviour change by inciting fear, guilt, and by heralding the inevitable disaster. Leaving aside frightening and ex cathedra teaching, by underlining the potential of the forum and of alternative education methods, museums can create the chance for talk on climate processes. The research conducted in the United States shows that on average 71 percent of Americans are aware of climate change taking place, yet only 36 percent admit that they have had a chance to talk about it. The majority of people are aware of the phenomenon, yet they do not converse about it.³³ Meanwhile, museums provide an arena for dialogue where people can meet and become familiar with an alternative exceeding their everyday life and experience, as well as with perspectives of other individuals, communities, places, trades, and sectors. Museums are key places of formal and informal education covering a wide thematic range: from science, through technology, medicine, up to ecology, and traditions of various ethnic groups. Owing to the fact that they enjoy high public trust, actually higher in many cases (countries) than the government, business, advertising, or the mass media, museums can be used as tools consolidating critical interpretation of the flood of information on climate change presented by the mass media and social media full of fake news. Museums are and can remain places of the presentation of diagnoses and argumentation based on facts, research, and verified proofs.

These recommendations seem of particular significance in the Polish context. One of the most important conclusions from the 2019 survey dedicated to how much people know about climate change is as follows: *Poles feel they know too little, and they are open to discussion. They accept educating better than frightening*.³⁴ Polish museums, but also libraries and other cultural institutions, on various levels, are faced with the opportunity, if not a must, to create fora for effective communication and education based on knowledge and eliminating fear resulting from lack of understanding. In this context, and particularly in smaller towns, an enormous opportunity is provided by the SOWA Initiative (reading: Zone of Discovering Imagination and Activity), launched in 2021 by the Minister of Education and Science, and implemented by the Copernicus Science Centre in Warsaw. Its goal is to create a network of 32 minicentres of science based on the resources and educational experience of local-government cultural institutions, including museums and libraries. The first 'little Copernicuses' were established e.g., at the Adam Próchnik Municipal Public Library in Piotrków Trybunalski, the Jan Pazdura 'Ecomuseum' of Nature and Technology in Starachowice, or at the Regional Museum in Jarocin.³⁵ The discussed initiative opens up opportunities for interdisciplinary display and educational projects combining humanities in the broad meaning of the term with science. Therefore, it provides platform for problem-focused projects approaching the presented and discussed issues from various perspectives: of different science disciplines or research methodologies, yet also from essentially different epistemologies, i.e., from the point of view of science and art. As a result, complex questions, such as e.g., climate change, their causes

and consequences, can be presented in libraries, museums, or art centres through the combination of areas which differ as much as history and visual arts with meteorology, physics, or geology.³⁶ They can become homes to those disciplines mixing in an academic atmosphere, which does not happen frequently. Therefore, particularly in smaller towns which as a rule lack academic centres, it seems that the optimal venues for mounting exhibitions and implementing educational programmes allowing to present argumentation and debate on climate threats are the cultural institutions hosting SOWA.

With respect to climate change museums' task is thus to contribute to the slow work on establishing the common world which we: humans and non-human creatures share on equal terms. This is the sense we need to adopt to tackle the above-raised doubts. Although museums and heritage institutions use the benefits of developed economy which harm the climate, at the same time they carry the potential that can be used to imagine a new order and an alternative vision of development not based on growth and inequalities. They can truly constitute the source of change of attitudes stemming from pro-environmental education.

Abstract: The paper is dedicated to museum's commitment to struggling for climate and against climate change. Facing the key imperative conditioning museums' operation whose sense is defined e.g., by the assumption that there will be 'some' future for whose sake it is worth while taking care of museum exhibits and other testimonies to the past and contemporary culture, the climate change we are witnessing makes museums face very special challenges. As institutions of social trust they continue to be regarded a credible source of knowledge, they engage increasingly more in activities aimed at preserving the environment. This can be clearly seen, for example in the exhibitions dedicated to the Anthropocene mounted in museums worldwide over the last decade. The engagement of

museums in this respect and this engagement's object are the topic of the paper. Furthermore, a critical view is presented not only of the people and the institutions they create, or more broadly cultures and civilisations, all of key importance for our planet's future, but also of the fact that certain topics, as praxis has shown, have remained untouched by museums (e.g., responsibility of global corporations or the ideology of capitalist growth). In this very context questions are also asked to what degree and how much museums can change their practices affecting the climate, if only by renouncing or at least limiting their participation in global tourism and competition for public's leisure time in the market game for attracting consumers' attention.

Keywords: sustainable museum, education, museums' future, the Anthropocene, climate responsibility, climate change

Endnotes

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- ¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 95.
- ¹¹ *Ibidem*.
- ¹² *Ibidem*, p. 96.
- ¹³ *Ibidem*.
- ¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 97.
- ¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 99.
- ¹⁶ *Ibidem*.
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- ¹⁸ K. Podemski, *Socjologia podróży*, Poznań 2005, p. 118.
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- ²⁰ Compared on the grounds: „Rocznik Statystyczny” R. 15, 1955, Główny Urząd Statystyczny, Warszawa 1954, pp. 254-255; *Działalność muzeów w 2019 roku*, Główny Urząd Statystyczny, <https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/kultura-turystyka-sport/kultura/dzialalnosc-muzeow-w-2019-roku,12,3.html> [Accessed: 12 June 2022].
- ²¹ See *Sustainable Museum: Art and Environment*, https://www.busan.go.kr/moca_en/exhibition01/1488230 [Accessed: 23 March 2022].
- ²² *Sustainable Museum. Art and Environment*, ed. by Kim Seong-Youn, Busan 2022.

- ²³ Kim Yoon-ah, 'Sustainable Museum. Various Ways of Exhibitions', in: *Sustainable Museum...*, p. 60.
- ²⁴ 'Eight Practical Strategies', in: *Sustainable Museum...*, pp. 44-45.
- ²⁵ Contrary to the popular conviction that it is mainly the young generation who seem the most aware of the catastrophic state of the environment and of its consequences which they will be realistically affected with in their adult life, also the 60+ group are concerned about the climate. See J. Chelmiński, *84 proc. Polaków przejmują się zmianami klimatu. Oczekują działań od rządu i biznesu*, <https://wyborcza.pl/7,177851,27704847,84-proc-polakow-przejmujecie-zmianami-klimatu-oczekuja-dzialan.html> [Accessed: 25 October 2021].
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- ³⁴ *Ziemianie atakują*, Warszawa 2019, p. 64.
- ³⁵ More on the SOWA Initiative see <https://www.kopernik.org.pl/projekty-dofinansowane/sowa> [Accessed: 9 August 2022].
- ³⁶ An example of a similar interdisciplinary exhibition and of an educational programme that accompanies it can be found in Wetterbericht. Über Wetterkultur und Klimawissenschaft at Bonns' Bundeskunsthalle (2017/2018). On its interdisciplinary character see H. Pleiger, 'The „Inter-Disciplined” Exhibition – A Case Study', *Museum & Society*, 4 (18) (2020), pp. 349-367.

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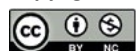
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WITHIN A CIRCLE OF AFFILIATES. MUSEUM AS A RESPONSIBLE COMMUNITY-CREATING INSTITUTION

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Introduction

One of the roles social museums play is consolidating interpersonal bonding.¹ This has been emphasized by both authors of various museum concepts (ecomuseum² open museum³ participatory museum,⁴ engaged museum,⁵ relational museum,⁶ and others), as well as participants of museum programmes⁷ and studies.⁸ As a result, shaping relations between the institution's various stakeholder groups⁹ has entered for good the discourse on a modern museum,¹⁰ posing the question, among others, whether, and if so, for what reasons, the institution should be assuming further social commitment¹¹ However, the growing diversification of museum activities on the one hand, and the intensifying dynamics of social change on the other cause that the question of conscious and responsible relation building remains the source of numerous dilemmas. This applies to e.g., museums' cooperation with their environment stakeholders,¹² such as institutions, organizations, and people, who based on the principles of good communication, but also consultations, partnership, and dialogue¹³ want to aspire to reach a shared goal,¹⁴ and create durable relations in order to be able to effectively affect their environment¹⁵ and boost social capital. How can, thus, the efficiency of building such relations be seen from the perspective of museum curators and representatives of this stakeholder group? Should they be established as part of Corporate Social Responsibility,

CSR,¹⁶ or in compliance with the ISO 26000,¹⁷ or maybe on completely different principles?

The goal of the present paper is to verify the above issues based on the analysis of the statements made by the participants of the 'Study of the Museum Public in Poland' Project¹⁸ who in the course of qualitative research¹⁹ not only expressed their opinion on the key groups of the public,²⁰ but also shared their reflections on the importance of social responsibility²¹ in shaping and managing relations which are created among the above-enumerated museum stakeholder categories. What is their opinion on museum's cooperation with respective circles of those external affiliates? Do the effects of this kind of initiative really provide grounds for changes in the institution's organization culture²² and affect the range of its social commitment?²³ What doubts are aroused by the issue of such relations being established in the museums, which do not always have tools allowing them the carefully listen to 'what are the main issues people around focus on'?

Dilemmas of the affiliates

On the grounds of the amassed materials²⁴ it can be said that in the participants' answer the topic of the range of museums' social responsibility²⁵ towards their environment stakeholders was often tackled. These, however, can hardly be associated with the implementation of a definite

museum model.²⁶ In effect, a deepened analysis of the discussion and interviews with museum curators, local leaders, and affiliates, allows only to identify four types of dilemmas faced by museum curators and stakeholder representatives who expect building long-term relations between a museum and respective circles of its affiliates.

The first dilemma type will speak of a deepening relation diversification. The groups interested in establishing cooperation with museums who stand out do not only encompass professional circles connected with a given institution's profile (artists, scientists, educators, culture animators, employees of other cultural and educational institutions, these including teachers, but also the individuals who co-create the museum collection). A reiterated deepened analysis of the whole material demonstrates that in this case also informal groups are equally important: those made up of social activists or volunteers. *We have relations with other associations, organisations. More and more willingly these resources of cooperation are built: Musical Centre, Chanterelle Fraternity, Association of Friends (2017_01_Muz2). There's such a group of so-called 'social activists'. They aren't volunteers, but people who show up for a definite purpose, to do a definite thing (2017_07_Muz) Who are those volunteers? A housewife, teachers, school and university students, soldiers, (2018_11_Muz).*

These increasingly varied circles of associates that can be found based on the research into participants' statements and publications related to other museums²⁷ and other cultural institutions²⁸ lead to creating gradually more heterogeneous circles often requiring a more 'tailored approach'. Therefore, as the second dilemma type related to managing the circle of individuals involved in museum's activity there emerges the lack of definite cooperation standards. As a result, institutions are faced with various challenges. On the one hand they try to apply the solutions which have been already implemented as a result of long-standing activities thanks to the involvement of the institution in practices of a given circle, while on the other, they want to satisfy the subsequent needs, those which many institutions have no tools as yet to cater to. *To me, a social activist who looks at life somewhat differently, the very cooperation is extremely important [...]. A museum is a place where professionals work. If I need knowledge, I know who to turn to (2018_12_Org). We used to have coffee, cakes on any occasion at the museum. And now we don't even wish to do anything like this [...]. Later some other actions started, and we couldn't do it here. We get together at my place [...]. We don't want to get in anybody's way in the museum (2019_07_Sen1). We do have a big problem with volunteers, because it's really difficult to find them, though appearances may claim to the contrary, and every year the problem recurs. Last year, we even actually stopped looking, because we decided that it was a waste of time and energy (2017_02_Muz).*

Such situations cause that attempts at extending museum's social commitment to shaping the institution's relations with a given circle of outside affiliates in many a case is connected with the necessity for employees to work out completely new standards which will not only be in harmony with definite legal regulations,²⁹ but within the respective spheres of shared activity will also fully allow for a large scale of diversification of given stakeholder groups'

expectations for their activity to be supported by the museum.³⁰ *NGOs can use rooms. There is a timetable where they can book their time slot. Always once a month, or twice, or occasionally three times, we book this room for the Association's meeting (2019_01_Sen). They come to us asking very simple questions [...]. We're such an info bank (2018_02_Muz). We've got vast groups of fans, friends who visit us not only during exhibitions and lectures, but who also simply pop in when passing by to have a chat [...]. They themselves generate ideas, they put forth their initiatives. At times to such a degree that we find it difficult to meet their requirements (2019_08_Muz1).*

An information centre, meeting venue, space to implement one's own initiatives are not the only needs that museum curators encounter when interested in the development of the institution's dialogicality within the sphere of shaping cooperation with the environment stakeholders. The third such issue is lack of appropriate tools to build heterogeneous relations beyond the museum's threshold. As a result, the increasing scale of the diversification of the needs of the groups which contribute to the museum's works cause that the translation of the idea of openness or participation³¹ popularized over the several decades into long-term scale of certain activities does not always permit to be implemented within the institution's environment. *The staff are unable to realize how important it is for the community if an organization or institution opens up. They often prefer to do certain things themselves, although they could use our cooperation (2019_02_Org). Certainly, good communication with the staff, because they are easily available and open to cooperation [...] If we were to bump into a wall the first or the second time round, the cooperation wouldn't be as good (2020_08_Dor2). Relations are built on well-organized work, but also museum's efficiency, because to build relations it's like with a relationship, you need time and money [...] It has to be arranged in such a way that if I cooperate with these people, it's real (2017_03_Muz1). It's not an easy process: consistency and persistence in action. [...] It's not formalized cooperation, but a relation of mutual giving (2019_05_Muz1).*

However, it is not only this lack of a broadly understood institution's openness, of mindfulness of the staff, of budget resources, or the lack of consistency that have a negative impact on social responsibility in the shaping of the range and format of constructing museum's cooperation with respective circles of associates from the institution's social environment. As the yet another fourth type of dilemmas, let us point here to the increase in the dynamics of changes occurring outside museums and the deepening of various sorts of crises which could be observed, e.g., during the COVID-19 pandemic. *If they close down the institution, it may turn out that some people will not have their work contract prolonged (2020_02_Muz2). The museum was not there. I missed it a lot, because I was cut off from all my activities (2020_02_Dor). Pandemic events cut us from all that was to follow. The question is how the Association will revive? Who will want to act and come? That's what worries me. I've no idea what our activity will look like (2020_03_Org).*

In effect, we can say that it is not merely the lack of complementarity of internal solutions, but also the implementing of definite standards on the management level that has

a negative impact both on the cooperation range, and durability of the already established relations in the event of challenges generated by external factors. Despite it all, however, museums continue seeking for such solutions which will make it possible for them to shape the institution's further development also by maintaining constant cooperation with their environment stakeholders, and to gradually increase their joint resources.

Museum curators' responses

The awareness that the institution's future can be shaped based on the increase in social capital of the circles that cooperate with the institution³² causes that regardless of numerous dilemmas, museums work on implementing the idea of social responsibility for the created relations. That is why they invest time and resources in consciously building such circles around the museum which would allow to boost their impact on different dimensions of social life thanks to the application of definite solutions to environment stakeholders. *We have groups which we're on good terms with, e.g., the Armenian minority with whom our relations are excellent. [...] At the moment they're opening their house, and we're helping them with it. They also continue participating all the time in our different activities (2017_04_Muz1). We've assumed the responsibility that volunteers who come for a year aren't maybe strictly under our control, but in a way somehow we take care of them (2019_04_Muz). We gather these friends [...] cyclically inviting them to meet with us here (2017_06_Muz1).*

A museum on the one hand open to various environments, on the other, participating in the social life of those groups on a daily basis, seems the first of the solutions which may attenuate the risk of problems negatively affecting their presence in the museum. Another such way to effectively build durable relations is also dialogicality³³ which allows rooting of various groups and the consolidation of their feeling of agency and involvement in the implementation of such processes. Finally, as the last factor shaping the cooperation frames close to social responsibility, we can point to getting to know the needs, as well as a certain sensitivity to the commitment of preserving the continuity of increasing the resources of each party participating in relation building and consolidating the bonds which are created through those activities. *The museum wants to satisfy the borderline needs (2019_05_Muz1). The shared mission unites it. We've got similar priorities and can sense what is the most important to us (2018_12_Gov). The essence of*

being at a given place and doing something together, learning from one another (2020_10_Muz2). It's a very tender relationship (2020_01_Dor).

It goes without saying that taking all the above factors into consideration contributes to conscious establishing of relationships and surrounding the museum with communities, as well as to boosting the institution's new resources. That is why in the opinion of many study participants when it comes to their associates, it is only the connecting of museum's definite activities with an attempt to implement principles of social responsibility and definite management solution that has a positive impact on making the museum both one of the main facilitators of the processes involving yet subsequent social groups, as well as turning it into an organization which can effectively react at moments of crises. *Not only immigrants from Arab countries, but also those from other parts of the world [...] who can be volunteers, and who can constitute an important element of museum life (2017_04_Muz1). A museum is ready to embrace a problem. It shows life without prejudices. [...] We begin to wonder more on what's there we've got in common, than what makes us different. We look for resemblances and differences. This is museum's unquestionable strength (2017_08_Muz2).*³⁴

Conclusions

In conclusion we can say that although over the last decade the CRS concept and the ISO 26000 Norm have become in Poland an important reference point for shaping organisation's culture and its operation principles, building relations between museums and museum's environment stakeholders is not always based on implementing change in managing a given institution. As a consequence, some museums who on daily basis operate within network society³⁵ and risk society³⁶ often continue without appropriate tools to consolidate the awareness of their social responsibility for such relations. Nevertheless, despite this many of them more frequently perceive the potential to implement such solutions which, as the research shows, do not only facilitate translating the assumptions of sociomuseology³⁷ into a given institution's praxis regardless of the museum's model or the character of its environment, but also prove to be a tool facilitating solutions to dilemmas which inevitably accompany the preservation of the museums' socio-creating function and their work to boost social capital. Therefore, it is so important to work out principles for creating long-term relations with environment stakeholders also in a museum.

Abstract: Museums as community-creating institutions are formed by various circles of stakeholders. Many of those circles result from a cooperation with a definite milieu. However, it is this extension of the circle of museum's affiliates and a gradually bigger impact of external factors on the range and form of these actions that make museums once again face the question how to consciously and responsibly undertake subsequent social commitments? How to establish durable relations that require participation in long-term processes in this 'irresponsible world'?

How to create circles of associates for this to translate into the development of the social capital of the institution and its environment? Based on the results of a subsequent deepened analysis of the material amassed in the 'Study of the Museum Public in Poland' Project in the course of a 4-years' quality study, four types of dilemmas have been presented: they are the dilemmas which the study participants tackled when talking about the museum public (discussed in a different publication), and which are faced by museum curators and their affiliates keen on an efficient cooperation

beyond the museum and on establishing durable relations. The analysis of these dilemmas will aim at demonstrating how the deepening of the awareness of social responsibility

can contribute to reaching socio-creative goals of museums regardless of the operation model a given institution implements on a daily basis.

Keywords: community-creating museum, relations, social responsibility, social capital, socio museum.

Endnotes

- ¹ K. Barańska, *Muzeum w sieci znaczeń. Zarządzanie z perspektywy nauk humanistycznych*, Kraków 2013, p. 163; R. Wiśniewski, G. Pol, R. Płasek, A. Bąk, *Oswajając zmienność. Kultura lokalna z perspektywy domów kultury*, Warszawa 2021, pp. 127-129.
- ² G.H. Rivière, 'L'Écomusé, un modèle évolutif (1971-1980)', in: A. Desvallées, *Vagues. Une anthologie de la nouvelle muséologie*, vol. 1, Mâcon 1992, pp. 440-445.
- ³ One of the programmes on the idea of an open institution was implemented at the Museum of Modern Art. For more see *Muzeum Otwarte 2011 – Muzeum Sztuki Nowoczesnej w Warszawie*, artmuseum.pl [Accessed: 26.04.2022].
- ⁴ One of the latest texts on N. Simon's idea is the conversation of M. Szeląg, PhD with K. Jagodzińska. See more 'Wzmacniający potencjał partycypacji. Rozmowa z dr Katarzyną Jagodzińską' | EPALÉ, europa.eu [Accessed: 26 April 2022].
- ⁵ With reference to both above-mentioned models, Łukasz Gawel discusses engaged institution as the third type. Ł. Gawel, 'Społeczna odpowiedzialność organizacji kultury. Muzeum w otoczeniu społecznym', in: *Zarządzanie w kulturze. Teoria i praktyka*, ed. by A. Pluszyńska, A. Konior, Ł. Gawel, Warszawa 2020, p. 85.
- ⁶ J. Byszewski, B. Nessel-Łukasik, *Muzeum relacyjne. Przed/ za progiem*, Sulejówek 2020.
- ⁷ Muzealny think-tank: Muzea i sąsiedztwo // publikacja by POLIN Museum – Issuu; O Atlasie – Atlas muzealnej partycypacji, muzeumpartycypacyjne.pl [Accessed: 26 April 2022].
- ⁸ Muzealny think-tank: Muzea i sąsiedztwo // publikacja by POLIN Museum – Issuu; O Atlasie – Atlas muzealnej partycypacji, muzeumpartycypacyjne.pl [Accessed: 26 April 2022].
- ⁹ In Robert E. Freeman's stakeholder theory various categories were enumerated, however in my papers I limit myself to one only: community/neighbours interesariuszy otoczenia. For more see B. Wit, 'Model biznesu z perspektywy interesariuszy', *Quarterly Journal*, 4 (19, 2016), (p. 88).
- ¹⁰ The example of such a debate can be seen in the meeting at the Museum of Modern Art. on 8 March 2016: Museums versus Community – Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw. Meeting with Joanna Mytkowska and Claire Bishop. For more see: *Muzea a wspólnota – Muzeum Sztuki Nowoczesnej w Warszawie – Muzeum Sztuki Nowoczesnej w Warszawie*, artmuseum.pl [Accessed: 26 April 2022].
- ¹¹ The last such meeting of museum curators and academics was the Conference: 'Modern Museum: Relations and Narratives' held by the District Museum in Toruń on 20-22 April 2022.
- ¹² B. Wit, *op. cit.*
- ¹³ M. Grzybek, *Zarządzanie relacjami z interesariuszami jako jeden z elementów społecznej odpowiedzialności biznesu*, *Zarządzanie relacjami z interesariuszami jako jeden z elementów społecznej odpowiedzialności biznesu – Forum Odpowiedzialnego Biznesu*, odpowiedzialnybiznes.pl [Accessed: 14 June 2022].
- ¹⁴ R. Wiśniewski, G. Pol, R. Płasek, A. Bąk, *op. cit.*, p. 129.
- ¹⁵ P. Bartkowiak, D. Dudek, E. Wszendybył-Skulska, *Koncepcja społecznej odpowiedzialności i koncepcja zrównoważonego rozwoju w procesie funkcjonowania organizacji*, Kraków 2016, p. 43.
- ¹⁶ EUR-Lex – 52011DC0681 – EN – EUR-Lex, europa.eu [Accessed: 14 June 2022].
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- ¹⁹ Quality research was conducted as IDIs (N: 110) and FGIs (N: 33).
- ²⁰ A detailed analysis of the results was collected in the publication: *Museum Public* compiled by the NIMOZ team implementing the Programme: P.T. Kwiatkowski, B. Nessel-Łukasik, J. Grzonkowska (in preparation).
- ²¹ S. Kowalska, 'Argumenty za i przeciw społecznej odpowiedzialności biznesu', *Zeszyty Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Humanitas. Zarządzanie*, 1(2014), (p. 211).
- ²² Ł. Gawel, *op. cit.* One of the programmes on the topic was the edition of the museum think tank in 2017. For more see *Muzealny think-tank: muzeum odpowiedzialne społecznie – Forum Odpowiedzialnego Biznesu*, odpowiedzialnybiznes.pl [Accessed: 26 April 2022].
- ²³ For more see 'Muzealny think-tank „Muzeum odpowiedzialne społecznie”' | Muzeum POLIN, youtube.com [Accessed: 26 April 2022].
- ²⁴ The quality research as part of the NIMOZ Project was implemented in 2017-2020.
- ²⁵ B. Rok, *Odpowiedzialny biznes w nieodpowiedzialnym świecie. Raport Akademii Rozwoju Filantropii w Polsce oraz Forum Odpowiedzialnego Biznesu*, Warszawa 2004, p. 46, *Odpowiedzialny biznes w nieodpowiedzialnym świecie – Forum Odpowiedzialnego Biznesu*, odpowiedzialnybiznes.pl [Accessed: 26 April 2022].
- ²⁶ Ł. Gawel, *op. cit.*
- ²⁷ A. Czerner, E. Nieroba, *Na styku historii i codzienności. Społeczność lokalna wobec miejsca pamięci*, Opole 2017, pp. 253-304.
- ²⁸ R. Wiśniewski, G. Pol, R. Płasek, A. Bąk, *op. cit.*, pp. 122-147.
- ²⁹ An example of this can be seen in, e.g., the Act of 24 April 2003 on Public Benefit and Volunteer Work, *Journal of Laws* 2020, item 1057.
- ³⁰ P. Bartkowiak, D. Dudek, E. Wszendybył-Skulska, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-16.
- ³¹ N. Simon, *The Art of Relevance*, California 2016.
- ³² P.T. Kwiatkowski, B. Nessel-Łukasik, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-58.
- ³³ In this case dialogality means enabling/ facilitating in reaction to the need of the Other, which is connected with the sense of responsibility of the Other. For more see M. Januszkiewicz, 'Dialogiczność jako demitologizacja Ja solipsystycznego', *Humaniora. Czasopismo Internetowe*, 1 (19, 2015), p. 74.
- ³⁴ Owing to yet another crisis this motif resounds most sonorously in the course of activities implemented with museum curators and refugees from Ukraine in minds; there had been 116 such actions by 12 April 2022. For more see *Kopia Zestawienie – stan na 12 kwietnia 2022.xlsx*, nimoz.pl [Accessed: 5 May 2022].

- ³⁵ M. Castells, *Spoleczeństwo sieci*, trans. by M. Marody, Warszawa 2007; T.H. Eriksen, *Tyrania chwili. Szybko i wolno płynący czas w erze informacji*, transl. by G. Sokół, Warszawa 2003.
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RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PAST? WAR BOOTY IN SWEDISH MUSEUM DISPLAYS

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The debate on museums' responsibility in the context of global problems has been ongoing for years, yielding different results. It was also tackled in the talks conducted on ICOM's forum, for example, when adopting the resolution on climate change (2016). Among the global topics that recur also those connected with 'collection decolonisation', display of war booty, and museums' responsibility in these respects can be named.¹ The question of war spoils has also been tackled in Poland, most commonly with respect to Poland's potential claims to Sweden for the objects looted in the mid-17th century.

The paper's main goal is to answer the question what narrative Swedish museums present with respect to the war booty and trophies that have ended up in their collections. Can their actions in this context be regarded as appropriate? Do museum curators have any *moral or legal responsibility to be accounted for [...]* other people's actions,² particularly as the looting in question took place over 360 years ago?

The paper has been divided into two parts. In the first one brief principles of war waging valid in the latter half of the 17th century are outlined, while the second discusses the means Swedish museum curators have worked out for communication on this fragment of the difficult heritage. In the last part, playing the role of a conclusion, I refer to the Polish museum experience with war booty and trophies.

The analysis covers the objects looted by Swedish troops from the territory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth during the 'Deluge', as well as war spoils and trophies which come from the pre-industrial era kept at selected Polish units. I will use the basic historical method for the narrative, i.e., description.

The context

International law in the shape that we know today is the result of agreements concluded after the end of WWII. In earlier periods, people based themselves on philosophers' and lawyers' writings. One of them being Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), a diplomat, adviser to Louis XIII, and later a representative of the Swedish Court of Queen Christina in Paris. His work *De iure belli ac pacis* placed him among *the fathers of international law*.³ In the three books, the author analyses means and tools for war waging, he introduces, among others, the concept of a just war, etc. He also tackles the issue of robberies, basing himself on natural law, making references to the Bible and ancient as well as mediaeval authors. Of basic importance is his claim that a war can be started only if it is just, so in a way it turns into a certain procedure of exercising one's rights.⁴ This view coincides with Cicero, St Augustine, or St Thomas Aquinas. According to Gropius, the law of nations⁵ introduced a definite form of war and that form, if it is maintained by force of the law of nations draws peculiar effects. Hence the distinction which Gropius wants to use: between a formal war (*bellum solenne*) which is called a just war, namely a full war, according to the law of nations, and informal war (*bellum non solenne*). As for the latter, Gropius continues, although its cause may be just, the law of nations does not support such wars, but does not impede them.⁶

A just war was a defensive one or such whose goal was to regain unlawfully robbed territories; it also had to be approved and declared by the ruler, this additionally

legitimizing looting.⁷ Basing himself on the war concept of Grotius's 'higher necessity', Charles X Gustav convinced the Swedish Parliament (1654/1655) that the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth who were involved in the war with Russia at that time, were planning to declare war on Sweden. Such an approach to the issue unequivocally gave it the status of a just war, at least as perceived from the perspective of the Riksdag and the army, which also gave them the approval of looting.⁸ Not having sufficient financing, the Swedish monarch borrowed money from magnates and nobility, while the still missing rest of the financing was to be supplemented with extraordinary taxes (tributes) in the seized territories, so the war should be able to 'feed' itself.⁹

Running a war on credit lured Charles X Gustav, however it entailed a risk: once it is over, the loans have to be paid back. One of the methods seemed to divide war spoils, that is why during the 'Deluge' their seizure was organized centrally. Swedish troops robbed deliberately and methodically, while the looted items: valuables, everyday objects, book collections, archives, or arms, were treated both as a pay and as enriching Sweden's culture.¹⁰

Swedish museums

The objects robbed in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth were dispatched to Warsaw which during the 'Deluge' functioned as the place of reloading the spoils, thus it was a peculiar 'central repository'. Following this, the objects were transported on the Vistula to Toruń, Elbląg, Piława (currently Baltiysk), up to the Royal Castle in Stockholm.¹¹ Militaria, both booty and trophies seized in the battlefield, were placed in the Royal Armoury, where in their majority they have been retained till this very day; meanwhile, art works, book collections, and archives were sent to the royal residence where they were classified: some were translocated to university libraries, others were given to some individuals.¹²

Until the early 21st century Swedish museum curators had not worked out a single communication format with respect to the war booty in their collections. This applies not only to the objects which came from the Commonwealth, but also from Germany or Denmark. In 2008, the Royal Armoury (Livrustkammaren)¹³ mounted an exhibition, symposium, and an international conference summing up a several-years' project dedicated to war booty and trophies in museums, libraries, and archives.¹⁴ Fifty participants from 11 European countries tackled the topic of institutions' responsibility for the heritage of this difficult provenance;¹⁵ they discussed how to narrate the war trophies as museum exhibits, and they attempt at outlining the directions of future research.

One of the seminar's participants was Prof. Bénédicte Savoy of Technische Universität Berlin, an expert on art translocation in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries, collection histories, and looted art works. In her address she pointed to the fact that war booty can be analysed from different perspectives, e.g., legal, object movement, and changes in their provenance, or history of the tastes of the period. She treated a museum as a place in which things are legitimized. She distinguished three areas of interest to museum curators:

1. *The iconography. How is the war booty displayed and what part does the museum play in this?*

2. *Museum practice. Why does museum activity legitimize the victor's annexation practice?*

3. *Rhetoric. How was the museum described, in words and pictures, in connection with the debate on war booty.*¹⁶

Prof. Savoy's paper, but also the accompanying debates yielded collective recommendations to Swedish cultural institutions, addressed to the participants of the international conference as well. It was the emphasis on the responsibilities of museums, archives, and libraries that was of key importance. In this case the responsibility was understood as proper storage, studying, conservation, and display of war booty and trophies as well as securing access to them, both the originals and their images (on-line databases). The objects were treated as a part of common heritage administered by the current owners.¹⁷ Agreement was also reached that it was essential to show the past period's contexts and realities not only in historical museums, but also, albeit to a limited extent, in art museums. Leaving information on a looted object inspires visitor's confusion, and only a broader context allows the public to correctly get to know the past and the history of the collection itself. Such an approach is strictly related to the philosophy of Freeman Tilden, an American researcher into natural and cultural heritage.¹⁸ The author actually says what Swedish museum curators worked out: *Information as such is not interpretation. Interpretation is revelation based upon information. But they are entirely different things. However all interpretation includes information [...] Interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part, and must address itself to the whole man rather than any phase.*¹⁹

Thus museums presenting war booty and trophies should relate history, yet they can do it on various levels, e.g., in a succinct caption under the objects (extended in a curatorial text), a recording in an audio guide, an exhibition catalogue, or as a supplementary note in the online database. The principle has been introduced in many Swedish museums. When visiting the display of the National Museum in Stockholm or the Royal Armoury, in the textual layer we will be informed about the provenance of the objects, and the supplementary texts will show their broader context. Additionally, online databases users have been provided with another functionality allowing to search for objects through keywords, in this case, e.g. war booty (*kriigsbyte*).²⁰

Why was it decided that such a solution should be adopted? According to the symposium participants, honesty and transparency of the message conveyed are our museums' responsibility, and we assume it for visitors to *be able to enjoy admiring objects*.²¹ Furthermore, such actions harmonize with the policy of the 'history of things' and return to them²² which based on a thoroughly investigated and studied provenance of objects. This is a key activity that has for many years been emphasized in Swedish, but also many foreign museums.

Instead of a conclusion

The format of communication on war booty based on the principles of heritage interpretation worked out by Swedish museum curators allows to conduct a transparent

communication policy of museums, also in the context of the collection's past. This is particularly important in the times of social media and creating institutions' long-term communication and advertising strategies. What has always been a key element permitting transparency are the activities aiming at studying the collections and a thorough investigation of their provenance.

In Polish museums war booty and/or trophies are also found, which is no reason for feeling ashamed, but which demonstrates that we have been and continue being a part of Europe's history. The Wawel Orientalia brought by John III Sobieski after the Battle of Vienna or single objects from the collection of the Polish Army Museum (MWP) in Warsaw²³ are merely some of the examples. Detailed provenance studies are something MWP can boast of: they have in their collection e.g., the Radziwiłł cannon. It was cast in 1638 when Birze was remodelled, at the same time artillery reform was being implemented; afterwards, looted by the Swedes in the course of the Second Northern War (after 26 September 1704), and then having been seized by the Russians, it was taken to St Petersburg. It reached MWP only on 17 March 1963.²⁴

More Polish museums could be named which have war booty in their collections. However, no coherent message format on that category of objects has been worked out. This can result from many problems, yet the most worrisome one is delays in collection studying and unused opportunities for provenance studies, or considering the latter to be an unimportant supplement to the current museums' operations. Without deepened knowledge of our collections the working out of communication policy for which such provenance studies form the grounds is entirely out of the question.

Article 2 of the currently valid Act on Museums in Poland stipulates in point 2 that the museums shall implement their goals by 'cataloguing and scientific classification of collections'; organization of exhibitions comes only in point 5, while educational activities are mentioned in point 7. I propose that we 'turn to things' again, and precisely that we treat collection studying as a priority activity, since this expresses our responsibility for our common heritage. It is only through collection studying and studying of objects' provenance that we can obtain the full image and understanding of our institutions.

Abstract: The paper's goal is to attempt to show what narrative Swedish museums conduct on spoils of war and trophies which are in their collections, how this strategy was worked out, and how to understand the responsibility *versus* the visitor watching such objects. Materials from a symposium and a conference held in Stockholm in 2008 have been analysed, and so have current texts (labels, curatorial texts,

entries in online catalogues). Swedish museum curators have considered their responsibility to be proper preservation, studying, conserving, displaying those objects, making them available to the public (exhibitions, online bases), thus the basic museum activity has turned into a synonym of modern responsibility. The key activity which enabled the working out of this joint policy is to be found in detailed provenance studies.

Keywords: spoils of war, trophies, Swedish museums, Swedish 'Deluge', collection provenance.

Endnotes

¹ One of the most spectacular examples was the recommendation issued by the Dutch Council of Culture (2021) on the return of museum objects which were brought from Netherlandish colonies between the 17th and the first half of the 19th century to their original owners. The issue was extensively commented on. See e.g., Dutch museums vow to return art looted by colonialists', <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/08/dutch-museums-vow-to-return-art-looted-by-colonialists> [Accessed: 25 May 2022].

² *Responsibility: 1. the state or fact of having a duty to deal with something or of having control over someone. 2. the state or fact of being accountable or to blame for something.*, Oxford online dictionary [Accessed: 23 July 2022].

³ H. Grotius, *Trzy księgi o prawie wojny i pokoju w których znajdują wyjaśnienie prawo natury i prawo narodów a także główne zasady prawa publicznego*, introduction and comp; R. Bierzanek, Warszawa 1957. The first edition was published in 1625 in Paris where Grotius was staying. See J. Miller, *Hugo Grotius*, in: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2021 Edition)*, ed. by E.N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2021/entries/grotius/> [Accessed: 25 May 2022].

⁴ H. Grotius, *Trzy księgi o prawie wojny...*, p. 22.

⁵ Equivalent to natural law in Grotius's eyes. See: *Ibidem*, vol. 1, p. 109.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 110.

⁷ Grotius presents the concept of the Roman *bellum iustum*, concentrating on the examples from the Bible and Roman law. See H. Hartung, "Praeda bellica in bellum justum?" The legal development of war booty from the 16th century to date: a chance of bettering museum practice?', in *War Booty. A Common European Cultural Heritage*, ed. by S. Nestor, Stockholm 2009, p. 26; E. Norberg, 'Krigets lön', *Livrustkammaren. Journal of the Royal Armoury*, (2007-2008), 70-72.

⁸ Grotius was later followed by subsequent lawyers and researchers into the topic of the modern era, e.g., Emer de Vattel (1714-1767) who in his study first published in 1758 spoke about conditions and possibilities for looting. See e.g., E. de Vattel, *The Law of Nations; or, Principles of the Law of Nature*, Philadelphia 1844.

⁹ H. Landberg, 'Krig på kredit. Svensk rustningsfinansiering våren 1655', in: *Carl X Gustaf inför polska kriget. Kungamakt och statsfinanser 1655*, ed. by A. Stade, Stockholm 1969, pp. 119-123.

¹⁰ K. Wagner, 'Szwedzkie zdobycze w Rzeczypospolitej. Zarys problematyki', in: *„W hetmańskim trudzie”. Księga Pamiątkowa ku czci Profesora Jana Wimmera*, ed. by Z. Hundert, ed. by M. Wagner, Oświęcim 2017, p. 124.

- ¹¹There also existed alternative routes, e.g., on land to Szczecin, from where to Sweden, yet that mentioned in the text was one of the most popular and most frequently used ones; it was also considered the safest. *Ibidem*, p. 126.
- ¹²The example of the Swedish General Magnus Stenbock from the time of the Great Northern War who sent a part of the looted objects to his wife shows that he mainly appreciated their material worth, and in his letters he precisely specified which objects should be kept, and which given to the Stockholm Mint to be melted for scrap. See *Magnus Stenbock och Eva Oxenstierna. En brevväxling*, vol. 1, no. 291, ed. by C.M. Stenbock, Stockholm 1913, p. 202.
- ¹³'Krigsbyte. War booty', *Livrustkammaren. Journal of the Royal Armoury*, (2007-2008).
- ¹⁴M. Hagberg, 'War Booty: a Common European Cultural Heritage', in: *War Booty...*, p. 7.
- ¹⁵The topics also covered objects from mediaeval ones (15th-century conflicts) till the 19th c.
- ¹⁶B. Savoy, 'Looting of Art: the Museum as a Place of Legitimation', in: *War Booty...*, p. 11.
- ¹⁷*War Booty...*, p. 9.
- ¹⁸F. Tilden, *Interpretacja dziedzictwa*, trans. by A. Wilga, Poznań-Warszawa 2019.
- ¹⁹*Ibidem*, p. 44. Tilden's quotation in English after: <https://mylearning.nps.gov/library-resources/tildens-six-principles-ace/> [Accessed: 23 July 2022]. The same thought has also been present in Polish literature. E.g., *From the very beginning of opening a museum the language key was needed. A museum was established thanks to the 'word' and its narrative and 'sensual perception' (image, sound, smell, touch). Today the term of a 'narrative museum' is often used, yet a story, narrative, verbal interpretation were from the ancient times inseparably connected with the concept of musaeum*. D. Folga-Januszewska, 'Dylematy etyczne w muzeach, czyli o prawdach', in: *Muzeum etyczne. Księga dedykowana Profesorowi Stanisławowi Waltosowi w 85. rocznicę urodzin*, ed. by D. Folga-Januszewska, Kraków 2017, p. 47.
- ²⁰The National Museum in Stockholm displays the busts of John II Casimir and Louise Marie Gonzaga looted during the Swedish 'Deluge' from the Kazimierz Palace (Villa Regia). The online catalogue, similarly as both objects' label contain information on their provenance. See Giovanni Francesco Rossi, Bust of Marie Louise, marble, ca 1651, 122 x 34 cm, collection of the National Museum in Stockholm, ACNO NMGrh 2430, <http://collection.nationalmuseum.se/eMP/eMuseumPlus?service=ExternalInterface&module=collection&objectId=39497&viewType=detailView> [Accessed: 29 May 2022]; Giovanni Francesco Rossi, Bust of John II Casimir, marble, ca 1651, 121,5 x 34 cm, collection of the National Museum in Stockholm, ACNO. NMGrh 2429, <http://collection.nationalmuseum.se/eMP/eMuseumPlus?service=ExternalInterface&module=collection&objectId=39496&viewType=detailView> [Accessed: 29 May 2022]. A similar approach is used by the Royal Armoury which in the e-catalogue provides general information that a given object is war booty and then it informs more extensively on the events' context. See <http://emuseumplus.lsh.se/eMuseumPlus?service=ExternalInterface&module=collection&objectId=56957&viewType=detailView> [Accessed: 29 May 2022].
- ²¹B. Savoy, op. cit., p. 16.
- ²²See e.g. B. Olsen, *W obronie rzeczy. Archeologia i ontologia przedmiotów*, trans. By B. Shallcross, Warszawa 2013; *The Social Life of Things. Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. by A. Appadurai, New York 2017; F. Trentmann, *Empire of Things. How We Became a World of Consumers, from the 15th Century to the 21st*, London 2017; D. Sudjic, *Język rzeczy. Dizajn i luksus, moda i sztuka. W jaki sposób przedmioty nas uwodzą?*, trans. by A. Puchejda, Kraków 2013.
- ²³Standard of Swedish cavalry seized during the 'Deluge' is in MWP collection (MWP 664), the second with Charles X Gustav's monogram is kept at the Wawel, while the same King's command sash is to be found in the Wilanów collection. MWP also has in its collection e.g., a Cossack kanjar (MWP 30111) from the early 19th c. seized in the Battle of Ostrołęka (1831).
- ²⁴I would like to acknowledge Mr Jarosław Godlewski for sharing with me information on the objects found in the MWP collection.

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‘CULTURE SHOCK’: MUSEUMS’ ACTIVITY DURING THE PANDEMIC

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The coronavirus has had and will have an unprecedented impact on museums. To better understand the status quo and what might come next, we are collecting resources, such as NEMO's report and interactive map, on our page dedicated to museums during COVID-19.¹

Empty UNESCO World Heritage sites, cultural events cancelled, cultural institutions closed, community cultural practices suspended, heightened risk of looting of cultural sites... artists unable to make ends meet and the cultural tourism sector greatly affected... The impact of the COVID-19 on the cultural sector is being felt around the world. This impact is social, economic and political – it affects the fundamental right of access to culture, the social rights of artists and creative professionals, and the protection of adversity of cultural expressions. The unfolding crisis risks deepening inequalities and rendering communities vulnerable,² is how UNESCO describes the situation of culture in the world in 2020. Furthermore, in the report commissioned by the Council of Europe, it was emphatically stated that the COVID-19 pandemic has wounded sociality and limited the possibility to stay together: the essence of many forms of art.³

‘Culture shock’ is how OECD described the reaction of the cultural sector to the sudden and global epidemic resulting in the institutional crisis caused by COVID-19, the report published on 7 September 2020.⁴ The description being to the point in the sense that no one had anticipated a similar course of events, or had been prepared for it. According to OECD, the venue-based sectors, together with concert halls, cinemas, and other institutions based in public buildings, are the hardest hit by social distancing measures. Although contrary to other organizations within this group, museums, at least

in Poland, are not threatened by the loss of financial stability caused by a drastic drop in admission income, they have not been spared a painful reduction in employment, implying mainly layoffs of the technical staff responsible for mounting exhibitions and their security.

However, organizational changes forced by the pandemic went far beyond the administrative and personnel level, since they affected to the same degree the very mission of museums, thus posing the question how to further implement museums’ statutory tasks, mainly making the collections available to the public. In response to this challenge a wide range of online projects were conceived: collections were made available online, social media came up with new initiatives, streaming was organized, so were curator’s tours, exhibitions in virtual space, and alike.⁵ Many were undertaken as an impromptu reaction.⁶ Within the multitude of initiatives a clear message could be identified: *art can be a remedy for forced quarantine.*⁷

Museums' operations in figures

According to the UNESCO Report *Museums Around the World in the Face of COVID-19*, 90% of all the museums worldwide have been affected by the pandemic and 10% are likely never to reopen.⁸ In 171 countries from among the 182 examined, almost all or some museum institutions were closed because

of the pandemic. Examining 95,000 institutions, the Report identified 800 types of varied initiatives undertaken in response to the pandemic-related crisis. The growing importance of digital technology in the museum sector has been emphasized; over the past year it was boosted, since many previously planned cultural events were digitized into their virtual versions. According to the Report, the greatest number of initiatives of online exhibitions held after the outbreak of the pandemic were mounted in European institutions. The Old Continent was an unquestionable leader in this respect, followed immediately by Asian museums.

The activity of museums throughout 2020 was affected by subsequent pandemic waves. A number of museums tried to resume their activity in the spring or summer. Such as Polish institutions, in which the turnout was reduced, and collections were made available conditionally only to those who followed the preventive sanitary regime. According to a Report by UNESCO prepared in early October 2020, only 37% of the world heritage sites were fully reopened.⁹ Regrettably, this having lasted merely for a month or two, the sites were closed again.

Along with the epidemic development, the world media witnessed a wave of information on the closure of exhibitions, festivals, biennials, fairs, and finally of the institutions that organized them.¹⁰ Some events were cancelled entirely, others were postponed. Optimists expected that the world would be back to normal in the autumn of 2020 (e.g., Art Basel initially moved its launch to September 2020¹¹), while pessimists proclaimed a long-term crisis (e.g. Triennial in Cleveland planned for 2021 was pushed to 2022¹²). Even the Venice Biennial had to give in to the pandemic.¹³ The latest to close down were British museums, Tate Modern including, which, as it may seem, tried to postpone the decision to close until the last minute.¹⁴ At that point the question was asked whether COVID-19 was to have such far-reaching repercussions as to postpone events by two years. Today we can see with much apprehension that this scenario is very likely. After the majority of art-dedicated institutions closed down until further notice in March and April 2020, including the Louvre,¹⁵ lay-offs of the staff followed. Many museums and galleries significantly reduced the number of their employees. Just to quote some examples: on 25 March, the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art and the Hammer Museum discharged 247 employees who did not have permanent contracts with them, while on 3 April the Whitney Museum in New York announced that in anticipation of a \$ 7-million shortfall it was breaching work contracts with 76 museum curators.¹⁶ According to the estimates of the American Alliance of Museums, AAM, all their members lose \$ 33 million daily, which in the horizon of a year may lead to the closure of 30% of their associated institutions.¹⁷

In mid-March 2020, all the locations of the two biggest auction houses worldwide: Christie's¹⁸ and Sotheby's,¹⁹ were closed. Since earlier almost all the art fairs had either been cancelled or postponed, art trade almost entirely stagnated,²⁰ with the only distribution channel operating online.²¹

Furthermore, COVID-19 also took its deadly toll among people of culture. On 24 March 2020, Maurice Berger, a 63-year-old critic and curator, passed away.²² In early April, a doyen of American architecture Michael McKinnell died

aged 84.²³ Just to quote the two, however many other examples could follow.²⁴

Time of the pandemic, time of change

Faced with the involuntary closure museums, were forced to find means and ways of sustaining the performance of their mission. Although, as shown by the above-quoted Reports, the majority of their actions consisted in swiftly making their collections available online, and also in organizing virtual touring of permanent exhibitions, testimony is also given to many unique and novel actions, previously unplanned.

The coronavirus provoked an overall debate over the sense of presenting art online. As much as the topic was not entirely novel, previously it had been tackled only incidentally. The prevailing majority of individuals professionally dealing with the organization of cultural events were sceptical about it, mainly owing to their conviction that virtual reality did not offer an equal range of sensual experience as a direct contact with art does. The internet was more often treated as a convenient repository of the earlier mounted exhibitions, where those as if gained their second life, rather than a venue for their actual launch.

The outbreak of the pandemic changed, however, conditions of the artistic life in this respect, too. This is well expressed in what the Chinese artist Pete Jiadong Qiang, whose exhibition was one of the first online events in China, says: *Online exhibitions will have their place in the future, and the epidemic accelerated the process. I would rather not have a specific boundary between online and offline, virtual and physical, especially for an emerging contemporary museum in Beijing.*²⁵ As much as sounding propagandistic, his statement is symptomatic of the pandemic reality in cultural institutions.

Also the most-widely known museums had to face the unprecedented situation of the world closed up by the pandemic. They were assisted in this by online services provided by platforms of high renown. And so, through Google Arts & Culture who had for many years worked on online tours of exhibitions, the public were given access to over 500 artistic institutions worldwide, such as New York's Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, London's National Gallery, the Musée d'Orsay in Paris, or the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.

On Twitter, for example, cultural events connected with displays can be found on #MuseumFromHome. It has been circulating in social media since national quarantines were imposed in various countries, showing which exhibitions the public can view without leaving home.

The pandemic has imposed numerous innovations on the world of art. They were not always enthusiastically greeted, but it remains an undeniable fact that 2020 abounded in precursory cultural events transferred from the real world to virtual space. It is the Sydney Biennale that is considered to have been the first big event which instead of being moved to a different date was held online.²⁶ Initiated on 14 March 2020, its 22nd edition was titled NIRIN, which in the language of the Wiradjuri people, namely in the aboriginal dialect, means the 'edge'. Encompassing 700 works by over 101 individual artists and collectives, it included many artists representing Indigenous Australians. The works were presented on the Google Arts & Culture Platform and in other social media, such as YouTube or Spotify.

Another major event to have been held online was the subsequent edition of Art Basel. The art fair was, however, privileged, as they own their premises, and are not forced to incur any additional costs of renting, this allowing them to take the organizational risk. At the end of the day, there was much interest in the event on part of the exhibitors. In view of the lack of competition the decision to go ahead proved profitable to the organizers.

An interesting solution was adopted by the organizers of the exhibition at the Boijmans Ahoy Drive-Thru Museum in Rotterdam whose operation was launched on 1 August 2020 as a reaction to the pandemic. The idea is for the public to drive in their private cars into the area of the display of large-format works in different media: paintings, sculptures, or videos.²⁷

Museums came up with a multitude of initiatives which in many a case were unexpectedly surprising. Such was unquestionably the instance of the action proposed by the Nelson-Atkins Museum in Kansas City when three penguins from the local Zoo were taken to wander around the permanent exhibition.²⁸ *They seemed to react much better to Caravaggio than Monet*,²⁹ commented Julián Zugazagoitia, Museum's Executive Director. It was thanks to this project that a local museum made the headlines of the online art-related portals, where it had not been present too much before. The public were moved away from their cognitive schemes. Maybe on some faces a smile could be seen, contradicting the grim atmosphere of the pandemic. And although similar events will most likely remain in future history merely slightly bizarre news items, and *shall not survive*, to paraphrase the words of Alina Kurczewska, Director of the International Henryk Wieniawski Violin Competition in Poznan said about some impromptu musicians' projects meant to hearten the public, *they were the necessity of the moment*.³⁰

Old masters online

From among a wide range of offers of digital displays of art it is hard to select the ones that are the most meaningful. Quite a varied scope of those appeared online, however none proved to be innovatory enough to have been granted the top place in different ratings in view of their either formal or factual ingenuity or pioneering character. Therefore, it seems justified to differently emphasize the issue and ask not which of the 2020 events were the most prominent, but which proved the biggest challenge to their organizers. Quite a strong argumentation points to the exhibitions of old art, particularly those which had been mounted for quite some time, and whose planned premiere coincided with the forced lockdown of the institution that was preparing it. Firstly, such a choice seems obvious in view of the character of the works of Old Masters which seem exceptionally distanced from new technologies. Secondly, the outlays incurred to prepare the displays had been substantial, while the projects entailed complicated logistical challenges (e.g. insurance, transportation, security, assembly, etc.), which implied a prospect of huge losses in the case of the event's sudden cancellation. Thirdly, the exhibitions had been anticipated as major events not merely owing to the wide public interest and henceforth derived expectations, but due to their relation

with symbolic dates, e.g. the 500th anniversary of Raphael Sanzio's death in 2020. On that anniversary Rome's Scuderie del Quirinale mounted the exhibition 'Raffaello 1520–1483': the largest exhibition dedicated to the artist ever held in history.³¹ It resulted from many years of research into the artistic legacy of this Renaissance Master. Ghent's Museum Voor Schone Kunsten, in turn, had for months been announcing the big opening also of the largest in history monographic exhibition of Jan van Eyck titled 'Van Eyck. Een optische revolutie'. This display, too, was the result of a long-lasting research as well as of the conservation works on the Ghent Altarpiece conducted as of 2012.

The difficult situation connected with the forced closure of cultural institutions in 2020 forced the organizers of the two widely advertised exhibitions of the Old Masters to make a tough decision: whether to postpone their opening or to transfer it to the online realm; the latter of the options being potentially easier to organize, since not requiring the prolongation of the rental of expensive works. It implied, however, difficulties in another respect: the money for the tickets purchased well ahead of time had to be returned to the public. Furthermore, the 'maintenance' of the exhibition was connected with the need to work out an entirely new format of the presentation of historic art.

Despite both exhibitions having been prepared as traditional museum displays, their presentation was performed online. It was before our eyes that a technological revolution in museums collecting and presenting old art occurred. In both cases the deficit in the sensual contact with art was at least partially compensated for with 'revealing' much information from the so-called production backstage of the displays. In Raphael's case they were numerous videos documenting the preparation of the exhibition, as well as the tour of the display together with its curators, accompanied by the comments made by the Museum Director Matteo Lanfranconi. In the case of Van Eyck videos were used to present respective works with comments.

The efforts of both institutions undertaken in order to overcome the limitations caused by the pandemic need to be assessed positively. In a sense, thanks to the events having been presented online, they became more widely available. Out of box office blockbusters, they turned into visual spectacles available to everyone online. The achieved effect makes us wonder if in the future the exhibitions mounted with a similar work outlay as well as financial and logistical resources should not be obligatorily registered and made available online, regardless of whether simultaneously with their presentation at the venue, or already following the exhibition's closure. This will safeguard their permanence, while the mission consisting in securing the broadest possible access to culture shall be substantially extended.

The future of exhibitions

The above-mentioned difficulty with choosing the most essential cultural events of the past year which occurred in virtual reality is confirmed by the lack of unequivocal assessment of those by journalists, critics, and curators. As yet no rating list has been created which would be approved by representatives of the world of culture. The information available online is dispersed. And although one can find a number

of articles recommending e.g. top 10 virtual exhibitions of the past year, their authors in general do not coincide in their judgment, providing divergent proposals.

However, the positive aspect of the lockdown and of the freezing of the operations of cultural institutions can be glimpsed in the attempt to incite a media debate on the organizational model of exhibiting projects, particularly the question about the future of so-called blockbusters, i.e., commercial exhibitions being Hollywood-like box office hits meant to attract hosts of visitors. Such was the category that two exhibitions mentioned above: those dedicated to Raphael and Van Eyck respectively, would have been classified as in the past. The format applied in order to 'save' them was by many commentators interpreted as a harbinger of something new: of change happening before our eyes.

Frances Morris, Tate Modern Director, referred to the COVID pandemic as a turning point,³² shortly to be regarded with the concepts as 'before' and 'after'. In her view, the organization of big exhibiting events involving multi-million-dollar-worth rentals of art works from around the world is probably right now becoming the thing of the past. Although her diagnosis sounds less dramatic than the alarming title of the art critic Jarry Saltz's paper in 'The New York Magazine' *The Last Days of the Art World*,³³ it is, however, not less pessimistic.

Instead, the majority of commentators agree that quite a number of changes in cultural activity are in store for us. As much as we are aware they are inevitable, it is hard to fully predict them today. In the voices representing museum institutions, however, the hopeful undertone can be heard that although with a certain delay, we will be positively surprised by art.

*If you look at the great traumatising events of the past – world wars, global emergencies of different kinds – artists have always responded, argues Director Morris. After the first world war it was dada and surrealism; after the second, existentialism and gestural abstraction. Whatever the work looks like, it'll be interesting.*³⁴

Even Saltz suggests that in the place of the world of art that we know, a new one will emerge. And as much as it is hard to foresee its shape, the interest in art shall not cease, claims the author. This makes us realize that the actual impetus is given to art by the people who are passionate about art on both sides of making it public: those who present it and those who see it (producers of cultural events and their recipients). Therefore, *on the one hand nothing shall replace a direct contact with art*,³⁵ claim unanimously representatives of cultural institutions, however on the other the COVID-19 pandemic constitutes the time of search for new strategies and of implementing institutional reforms. Museum curators believe that the public are eagerly awaiting the reopening of exhibiting institutions, and that it is worth while to take advantage of the momentum to prepare for welcoming visitors anew. According to the information provided by Tomasz Łęcki,

Director of the National Museum in Poznan, in the course of the UNESCO debate *Art in the Face of the COVID Pandemic*, the temporary opening of the institution he runs on 6 May 2020 after some months of the lockdown demonstrated the huge need for a close contact with culture: *promptly the turnout exceeded 50% of that of the previous year, and in some weeks, e.g. at Rogalin, it even went beyond 100%. This was a kind of an individual family reaction leading to revisiting important places.*³⁶

This may serve as the best prospect for the time after the current crisis and the reopening of museums.

The 'culture shock' referred to at the beginning of the present paper, which resulted from the forced lockdown for sanitary safety of the whole creative sector, became visible in the cultural policy of states and international organizations of different levels. Among them e.g., the strategy for the recovery of culture and media following the COVID pandemic worked out by the European Council.³⁷ It enumerates the whole range of activities meant to animate artistic creativity. One of its basic assumptions is to make the cultural sector resilient to similar upheavals that might happen in the future. Apart from the possibility to benefit from the EU's and Member States' recovery funds, the strategy also foresees the development of the digital infrastructure as a social benefit from the situation that occurred.

Aid programmes are meant to alleviate organizational difficulties of cultural institutions, however as such they do herald essential changes. In all the documents issued recently by such institutions as e.g., ICOM, UNESCO, national organizations associating museums, as well as NGOs focused on monitoring cultural life, forecasts can be found of the transformations the museum sector will undergo. As much as they arouse anxiety, they fit in the chain of historical events which have been altering functions and importance of museum institutions, however maintaining their essential role in culture and social life of every civilization.³⁸

Online exhibitions will remain in place, yet not as the main goal of the public. The longing to resume the direct contact with art is clearly visible, while virtual presentations cannot become its competent substitute. Nonetheless, the change occurring before our eyes cannot be underestimated, since virtual reality has proven a true remedy for the crisis of traditional forms of contact with art. For many people it has been a real rescue, this actually testified to by the meme popular at the beginning of the pandemic: *If you think artists are useless, try to spend your quarantine without books, poems, movies, music, paintings, and games.*

In this context the concept of 'digital culture' and the inevitable shock that accompanies its introduction, particularly in the area of presenting old art, gained an entirely new, actually a much broader, and at least partially positive meaning.

Abstract: The questions related to museums' operations worldwide in 2020, namely during the so-called enforced quarantine resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, are tackled. The actions of museums and other cultural institutions in reaction to the unexpected world pandemic and henceforth derived sanitary restrictions aborting the regular operations of museum as well as the fulfilment of their statutory mission are discussed. Statistical data and conditionings of museums' activities in different countries are analysed. Furthermore, the major documents issued by organizations such as UNESCO

or ICOM are presented and briefly characterized. Additionally, the focus is put on the analysis of cultural policies with museology in mind proposed domestically and internationally, and aiming at providing institutional and financial support to museums' operations. Moreover, questions are posed related to the possible direction of changes in museology caused by the pandemic. A subjective selection of the most interesting online events of the first pandemic wave has been presented. Also, an attempt has been made to diagnose the future of exhibiting in the digital era.

Keywords: culture versus pandemic, museology, COVID-19, culture-related law, online exhibitions.

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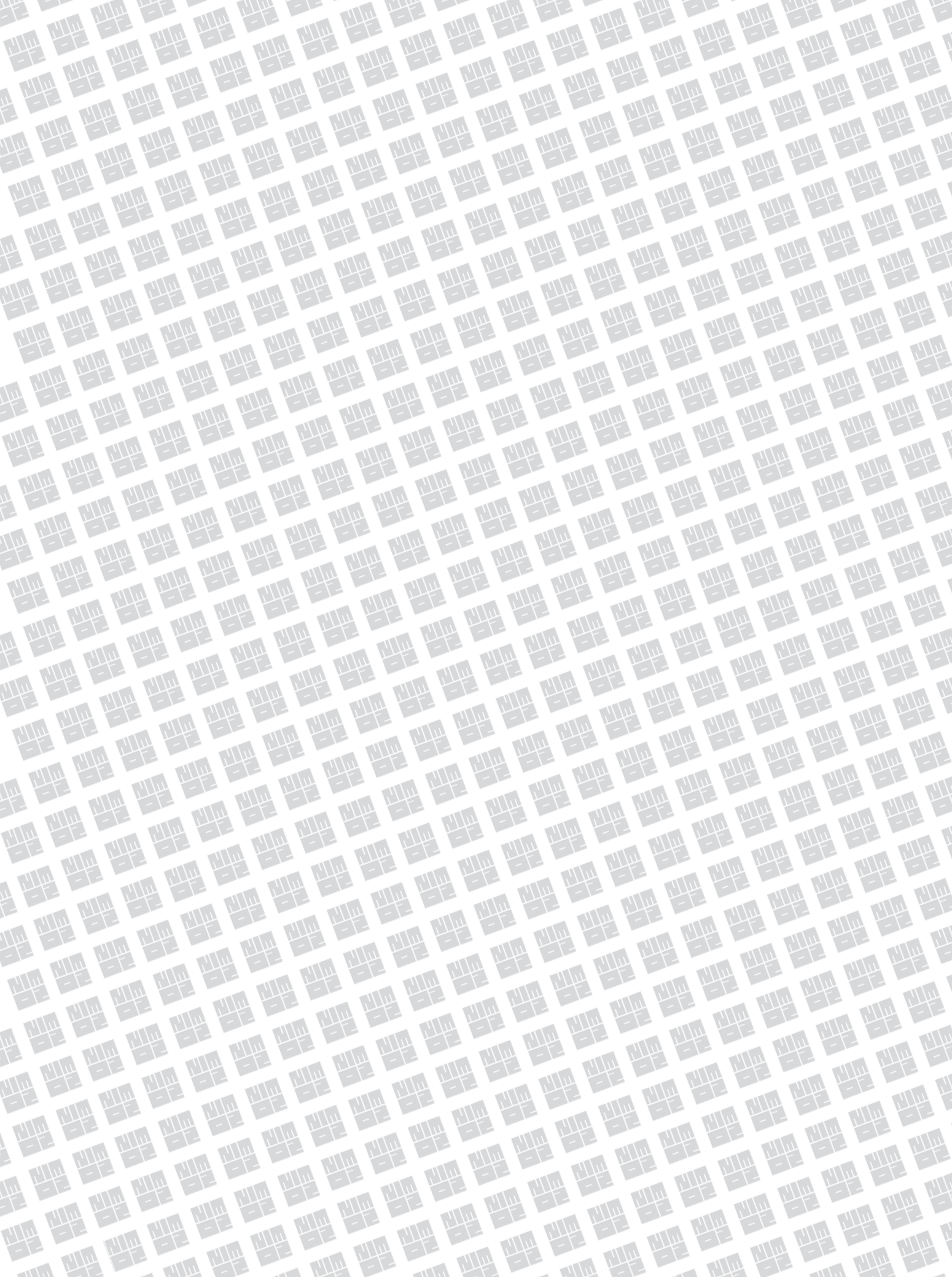


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PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC IN POLISH MUSEUMS

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In the 21st century, museums of different types, following the achievements of New Museology have been on a large scale 'opening up' to the public. In strategies, programme activities, and promotion campaigns it is the open character of the institution that is emphasized. In museum praxis and museological literature the word participation has been appearing increasingly more often. The public are encouraged to co-create or consult museum programmes. They are invited to visit museum zones not long ago accessible exclusively to museum staff. Never before in museums' history has the position of the public been as prominent. Next to the museum collection the public have become the purpose of the institution's operations. This emphasis shift can be defined as a true revolution: in museological literature Peter Van Mensch used the term of so-called second and third museum revolution.¹ The key concepts that museums apply more and more frequently and which are widely present in museological literature are participation, public involvement, social inclusion. Museums are analysed in the categories of social impact and social change. The fashion for museum participation that has become dominant over the last dozen of years requires a critical analysis.

The paper has been planned as a cross-sectional overview of participatory programmes in Polish museums. They will be categorized and characterized, placed within the philosophy of museum operations, and preliminary conclusions resulting from the implementation of such projects will be formulated.

The thematical content of the paper is connected with my research project *Participation and Postmuseum*. The thesis I formulate in it is that although change in the context of the implemented participatory projects is visible in museums, and an increasing number of museums have been following the concepts contained in the new proposed museum

definition discussed at the ICOM General Conference in Kyoto, participation is often but illusory and superficial, thus (except for single cases), fundamental change has not been really occurring. In the paper I will try to answer the question how programmes, participatory in their character, affect change in museums themselves. I will use the material collected in the *Atlas of Museum Participation* created with the grant of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage in 2020, and meant to be continued in subsequent years.

Understanding of the term 'participation'

The concept of the participatory museum appeared for the first time in the early 20th century in the course of the career and theoretical thought of John Cotton Dana², long-standing director of the Newark Public Library, Newark, New Jersey, (1902–1929) and Newark Museum (1909–1929). Later on the 'ladder of citizen participation' formulated by Sherry R. Arnstein³ was adapted to museum practice, yet it was only owing to Nina Simon, her blog and book,⁴ in the early 21st century, that the concept of museum participation became widely popular. Simon created a new pragmatic systematics of participatory practices in relation to the degree of the involvement on part of the public and museum staff, defining four models of social participation: contribution, collaboration, co-creation, and hosting, differing in the degree and scope of involvement.

The understanding of participation by museum staff: on the one hand directors marking out the directions of the museum operations and authors of participatory projects on the other, may differ. Many individuals refer to Simon, that is why in my research I followed her definition of the participatory museum, however, in many a case the understanding of participation is intuitional, not really referring to the theory; it can also be very broad, e.g., participation



1. Preparations for the 'Anything Goes' Museum' Exhibition at the National Museum in Warsaw, 2016

can be identified with presence (namely every visiting an exhibition or taking part in a museum class is participation), which I reject on the grounds of my research.

Categorization and characteristics of participatory projects

The afore-mentioned *Atlas of Museum Participation* was created in order to collect knowledge of participatory projects and programmes implemented by Polish museums. I have classified them into the following categories: exhibition, guided tour, volunteering, council/club, archive, collection, philosophy, and project, with the latter category covering all the non-standard actions which do not fit in the remaining lists.

The greatest impact is exercised by exhibitions, this owing to their relatively long duration and wide accessibility to individuals from outside the group of project participants. Work on an exhibition is usually of a long-term character and encompasses not just working out the curator concept, but also e.g. work on the layout, preparation of papers for the catalogue, or even creation of artistic interventions. These projects differ in the degree of participant involvement and freedom zone within which they can move. Action participants gain the curator status, although their task generally does not go beyond filling in the frames created by the project authors with content.

The 'Anything Goes' Museum Exhibition mounted at the National Museum in Warsaw (2015–2016) has been the largest project of this type implemented in a Polish museum. It was created with the participation of 69 children's curators who, divided into six groups, guided by tutors, worked on preparing a display with the Museum collection. Young curators selected objects from the Museum storage, thought out the theme and narration,

worked on the layout, catalogue, recorded material for audio-guides, gave interviews, and guided visitors. The scope of their freedom was large: *we were trying to follow them*, says Bożena Pysiewicz⁵ who co-coordinated the Project, however, the style of tutors' work to a large degree was also reflected in the final shape of the Exhibition.

A similar concept of working with curators selected from among the public served as the basis for the 'How Do You See It?' Project and Exhibition at the Herbst Palace Museum in Lodz (2018–2019). The difference being that the curators did not choose works for the display: these had been selected by the public in a poll, so the curators' task was to build up narration around them, placing them within exhibition rooms, and labelling them. The Exhibition was prepared by a team of ten curators supervised by Museum coordinators. The curators strictly followed the Project script, while their scope of freedom was limited to definite factual decisions related to the Exhibition narration.

A long-term curator and artistic work were combined in the 'Earth Given(Up)' Exhibition Project (2020–2021) at the Central Museum of Textiles in Lodz. Children and teenagers were invited to create their own exhibition on the topic they chose, assuming the roles of curators and artists. The participants enjoyed quite a scope of freedom in thinking out the Exhibition's concept. Magdalena Gonera, Project's originator, recalls in the context of applying for a grant for the Project that *in Ministry's grant competition it is requested to provide a detailed description of the project, however, I personally didn't want to decide what the exhibition would be, and certainly not what its title would be. We wanted the children to come up with this. What I wrote in the application had to be later updated, because when the kids came to the Museum they decided that they wanted something completely different.*⁶



2. 'How Do You See It?' Exhibition at the Herbst Palace Museum in Lodz, 2018; on the left, a stand for visitors to write down their comments



3. Works on the 'Subjugated Land' Exhibition at the Central Museum of the Textile Industry in Lodz, 2020



4. Gallery walls filling up during the 'ms3 Re:akcja' Exhibition at the Museum of Art in Lodz, 2009



5. Cooking workshops crowning the #veganpoems action inspired by Jimmie Durham's 'God's Children, God's Poems' Exhibition implemented by youth club members, 2018



6. Donors' meeting to celebrate the first year of the Podgórze Museum, 2019

From among all the participatory projects the 'ms3 Re:action' Exhibition mounted at the Museum of Art in Lodz (2009) was of the most democratic character. In its assumption, the anti-exhibition established a dialogue with the tradition of mounting exhibitions and the role of the public in a museum. The Project was an invitation to act, and the action, depending on the participants' choice, could be either incidental or long-term. The Museum opened to visitors an empty room dedicated to temporary exhibitions where items and tools for creative work were available; they also provided an option of using one's own materials. For the period of three months the Museum became the stage proper to public spaces, in which the only restrictions were those related to safety. The Exhibition was created in an organic way, without any interventions of the Museum staff.

Co-creating an exhibition can consist in creating its elements. Such was the case in the 'MOVERS' Exhibition at Warsaw's Asia and Pacific Museum (2019–2020). The participants: students of the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts, cooperated with the Museum for a year, beginning with visiting its storage spaces and discourse meetings up to creating their own artistic work which either corresponded with a chosen collection item: an object which actually had moved the person, or using their work they wanted to move (in the sense of activating, re-interpreting) the collection.

A long-term character, even longer than work on an exhibition, can be found in activities undertaken in volunteering or a membership in a museum council or club, although when compared to Anglo-Saxon countries, the number of the latter is small in Polish museums. The most extensive volunteering programmes can be found at the largest museums: the National Museum in Warsaw, the Museum of King John III's Palace at Wilanów, and the Warsaw's POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews. There volunteers

implement their own projects, have a coordinator; they can also involve in the museum's current operations. Club activity has developed most strongly at the Museum of Art in Lodz where there is an ms17 club for teenagers and the ms club for adults. Members of the first meet once a week and work together on chosen projects (one major project yearly; they also engage in the Museum's current work). The Club's formula is broad and open to proposals from the young people, although, as Agnieszka Wojciechowska-Sej who runs the Club admits, there is a need for *the teenagers' creativity to be provoked*.⁷

For six years there operated a meeting platform for teenagers from secondary schools at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw (2013–2019); called 'Enter the Museum!', it combined a circle of interest, with a club, and a volunteer programme. It provided space allowing to become acquainted with a museum institution, to become involved in projects, and to undertake one's own activities. Katarzyna Witt, author of the concept and Project's coordinator, recalls: *I was open to all their ideas (...) with each new edition I could better understand that the participants had to be given an even more active role, and co-create the Programme. Instead of us conveying knowledge, we were generating it together, this resulting from being together, from the meeting of different people*.⁸

Participatory projects in the philosophy of museums' operations

The number and scale of participatory projects show what position this formula has in the philosophy of museums' operations. The idea of working together, co-deciding on the programme, co-creating the collection, is particularly close to some museums; for the sake of commonality, they give

up their authoritarian position of knowledge conveyors. The participatory philosophy serves as the grounds for the work of many 'in-field' museums for whom cooperation with the local community is not so much a necessity, as a natural attitude and approach to work. The very definition of participation for the activities undertaken by these museums is secondary, while their staff do not really use the term. Martyna Safek, running the Sea Fishing Museum in Niechorze, speaks of a sort of neighbourly relations: *We do not only play the role of a museum, but also to a great degree of a kind of a community centre which brings together NGOs and various informal groups. Off-season, quite a lot people do not work, and culture is in great demand. We provide the venue for them to meet and integrate (...) Many groups and organizations meet in our rooms, have their offices there.*⁹

New museums, when awaiting their permanent exhibitions, attempt at taking root in the local community. In this respect urban museums benefit as if twice, since establishing a relationship is often connected with amassing objects and stories for the collection. Established in 2018, the Museum of the City of Malbork (MMM, under organisation) has from the very beginning attempted at establishing their relations with the residents, trying to overcome the challenging history of the city in which, following WW II, almost all the city was resettled with newcomers. Dorota Raczkowska, Director, emphasizes: *we want to teach people that they can come to MMM at any time, talk, learn how to archive family mementoes and trust us sufficiently to believe that if they pass them onto us,*

*these will not disappear here (...). Such a process needs to gain momentum. We know that if one lady brings something here, shortly her neighbour will, too. I believe that the first ten years will have to pass before we win the trust of the people who have come here from different places, and still do not fully treat Malbork as their home.*¹⁰

The participation idea can sometimes motivate establishing a museum. This is exactly what happened in Cracow: energy concentrated around a tiny Podgórze History House run by the district cultural centre, over ten years climaxed with the launch of the Podgórze Museum as a branch of the big Museum of Cracow. Melania Tutak who ran the Podgórze History House remembers its beginnings: *I did not organize collections of objects then, (...) with time, when the items began to flow in, it turned out that they could serve to create a kind of a permanent exhibition. And later, when someone came and saw that display, they would soon first bring the items they had at home, and later objects they would buy (...). Around the Podgórze History House there appeared people affiliated to the cultural centre and the association [PODGORZE.PL]; they would come and go, and share their stories, recollections, so a need arose to somehow systemize it all.*¹¹ Once the Museum had opened, maintaining that energy and relations with the local community proved challenging: museum-related restrictions connected with e.g., security procedures, the necessity to plan events with much anticipation, or red tape, curb the potential for swift reactions and action flexibility.



7. Building of a housing estate close behind the site of the Silesian Museum in Katowice, November 2020



8. (A-B). 'My Courtyard Museum' Project implemented in Gniezno by the Museum of the First Piasts at Lednica, 2014; (A) Digging up the treadmill with children, co-authors of the exhibition; (B) The treadmill displayed

(Photos: 1 – P. Grochowalski; 2 – P. Tomczyk, Archives of the Ministry of Justice in Łódź; 3 – HaWa; 4 – M. Stępień, Archives of the Ministry of Justice in Łódź; 5 – A. Wojciechowska-Sej; 6, 7 – K. Jagodzińska; 8 (A-B) – Archives of the Museum of the First Piasts in Lednica)

Change in museums

Participatory operations point to the direction of changes occurring in contemporary museums; attempts have been made to make them reflect in the new museum definition to be authorized by ICOM. The draft definition from 2019 contained many key words which do not appear in the currently valid one: *Museums are democratizing inclusive and polyphonic spaces for critical dialogue about the pasts and the futures (...). They are participatory and transparent, and work in active partnership with and for diverse communities (...).*¹² Although the definition was not approved through the vote¹³ and works on its new phrasing are continued, the unrest it stirred up among the museum-related circles and the support for this direction of thinking about museums expressed by many museum specialists and museum curators demonstrates how deeply museum philosophy has been changing. *Museology has come full circle*, writes Dorota Folga-Januszewska, *after almost two thousand years of museums existing as venues for meetings and intellectual inspiration, after two centuries of acting for 'citizens', the institutions are once again seeking individual people among their public.*¹⁴

More and more boldly do museums surpass borders delineated by the questions related to the amassed collections, tackling relevant contemporary topics, e.g., environmental questions, multiculturalism, migrations, urban space. They operate in discourse and display programmes, but are also launching activism in the sphere of broadly-conceived social responsibility, e.g., for spatial change in museums' vicinity, encouraged to do so by the 2016 ICOM Resolution titled *The Responsibility of Museums towards Landscape*.¹⁵ Acting in harmony with the spirit of the Resolution, the Silesian Museum in Katowice showed determination when opposing the developer operating on the land neighbouring on the Museum complex (2018–2019); the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw started building partnership with institutions and entities grouped around the Defilad Square (2017–2019) at which currently the construction of the Museum's seat is underway; while the Podgórze Museum, in cooperation with the associations operating in the District, started lobbying to have a park created next to the Museum (from 2018).¹⁶ These are examples of museum activism¹⁷ in which participation direction is reversed: then museums, together with the community or definite stakeholders, begin to co-create space around them.

The overview of participatory projects in Polish museums allow to draw initial conclusions with respect to the question posed at the beginning of the paper: how do participatory programmes alter the very museums? Just listening to the voices of the individuals involved in the implementation of participatory projects we realise what kind of a change has occurred on the personal level. Let me quote two reflections here.

Mariola Olejniczak, originator of the 'Museum of My Courtyard' Project, implemented in Gniezno by the Museum of the First Piasts at Lednica, says: *I have changed my perspective. Thanks to this action I know that it is worthwhile asking the public, listening carefully to what they have to say, instead of treating yourself as a person who knows better.*¹⁸

Bożena Pysiewicz comments on the lesson that can be learnt from the 'Anything Goes' Museum Exhibition: *I have a feeling that a shift in thinking has taken place. Participation begins to be a permanent tool for acting within various museum teams (...). Participation may be a tool serving to listen to the public, to encourage them to act, for them not to be merely participants, but also initiators of museum actions. I believe that we are on the way to accepting the fact that state or local-government institutions are the property of the public. Our role is to convince the public that these belong to them. Many of the staff are already aware of it, the next stage will be to encourage the public to act.*¹⁹

Work of a participatory character benefits both project participants and the museums, however, this formula, despite an increasing awareness and fondness for it among museum management, is more marginal than widely-spread. In the first edition of the *Atlas of Museum Participation* for which material was collected in 2020, I entered records of 50 projects from 32 museums. The list of such projects in Polish museums is not complete, yet it certainly covers the majority of them, which clearly shows that in Polish museums such projects are scarce. It is often the case that enthusiasm for such a working formula is spread by individuals directly involved in implementing them, having been given approval by the people they report to, and not *vice versa*: it is not the bosses who motivate to follow it. Although the latter observation cannot be regarded as an overall rule, e.g., the participatory philosophy forms grounds for the activity of the Ethnographic Museum in Cracow, while the 'Anything Goes' Museum was conceived by the Director of the National Museum in Warsaw at the time Agnieszka Morawińska. The majority of implemented projects are just one-off projects, this showing that museums treat them as a sort of a test: verifying how this formula allows to work. What is more, usually small-scale projects, they are in their museums' programmes but of marginal prominence.

The experience of implementing participatory programmes changes first of all definite individuals working for museums, not necessarily the institutions as such. After all, museums are people. Nevertheless, when these individuals leave the museum they worked for, their expertise, experience, and enthusiasm for this work formula often leave with them.

Abstract: In the 21st century, participation is one of the key words related to the operations of museums and debate around them. The public are encouraged to co-create museum projects: exhibitions, programmes that accompany exhibitions, studies; they play the role of consultants and advisors (youth councils, clubs, consultancy teams). Museums are more and more widely 'opening' to embrace the public.

Never before has the position of visitors been as significant.

An overview of participatory programmes in Polish museums is provided. They are classified and characterized by the Author who places them within the philosophy of museum operations, particularly with respect to the altering role of museums, currently debated over within ICOM, with the context of the new museum definition in mind; furthermore,

she presents the initial conclusions drawn from the implementation of such projects for museums.

In the paper the material from interviews conducted

as part of the *Atlas of Museum Participation* Project implemented with a grant from the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage has been used.

Keywords: participatory, International Council of Museums (ICOM), museum activism, museum definition.

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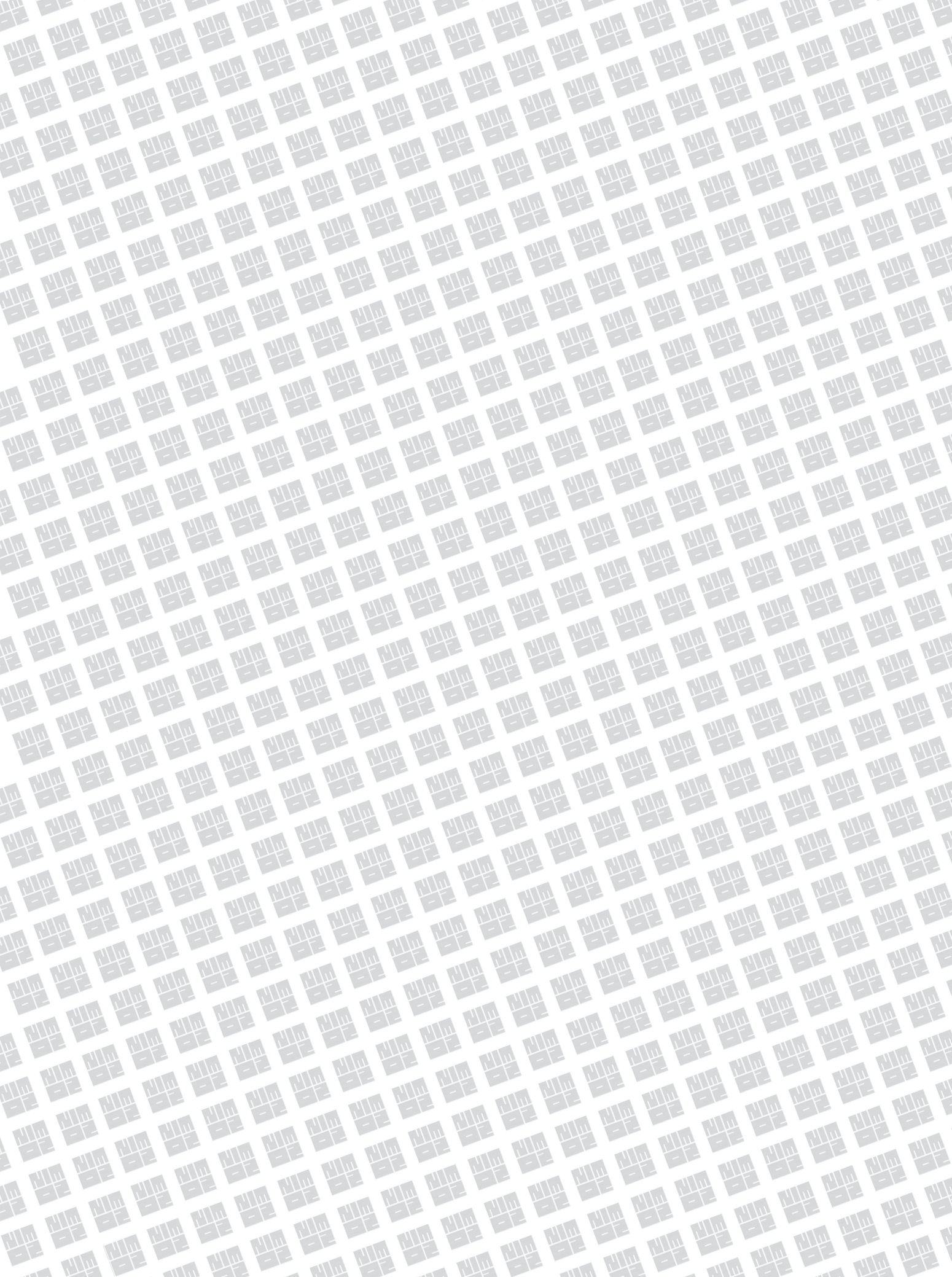


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THERE IS NO STANDARD INTERPRETATION. MISREADING VERSUS THE MUSEUM PUBLIC

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The present paper shall refer to the theory of interpretation applied to the realm of a museum institution. I will repeat in it the ascertainment, sounding slightly trivial within the paradigm of the New Museology, that interpretations of museum visitors conditioned by respective particular contexts are equivalent. And that more than of the object, they speak of the cultural life of a definite individual. I will, however, argue that the interpretations prepared by a museum are as valuable as the interpretations formulated by the public. They also speak more of the museum's conditionings (its dependence on race, class, gender, etc.) than of the object itself. Meanwhile, the institution usually hides its accidentality under the infallibility mask. What is more, it does so out of necessity. Any brave interpretation must present its infallibility, though at the same time anticipate readiness to be overthrown.

In a series of four intellectual experiments I will demonstrate how Harold Bloom's concept of 'misreading' explains this instable existence of interpretation in a museum. Additionally, I will point to the elements from Bloom's theory that might be relevant to the institution's activity.

Experiment 1

To begin with, let me propose a mental experiment. Let us imagine that there are some visitors (after all!) coming to a museum. A group of a dozen individuals or so pause in front of an object they have not seen before. The public surround the object; respecting the ban on touching museum exhibits, they just watch it from all the sides. The majority read the text

on the label (some reach for their glasses for the purpose), yet almost nobody understands even half of the words written there, which seem to be Latin. Despite this, the museum visitors begin to decide what they are looking at. Someone says it is a water jar. Another person judges it is a winnowing basket. Someone else suggests it is a ploughshare. Another individual claims that it is a plough pole. One word leading to another, the heated debate is started: *it is this, it isn't that, it's that, it's not that*. And to the delight of museum curators gathering around, before the qualified guardians of the display and security guards unwillingly interfere, there is an outbreak of fist fight (which surprisingly is not banned in the regulations of this imaginary museum).

The experiment I have just run was biased. Not in order to draw particular attention to the museums with ethnographic or archaeological collections, but because it is a museum version of the old Buddhist parable of the ruler of Savatthi who ordered to group in his presence all the blind since birth living in his city, following which he instructed for an elephant to be brought to them. The blind men, having touched the huge animal, however each on its different part, were to formulate their opinion on an elephant. The one who had touched the head judged an elephant was just like a water jar. The one who had felt the ear claimed that it was like a winnowing basket. Having touched the tusk, another one claimed an elephant was like a ploughshare. The blind who had patted the leg claimed it was like a plough pole, and so on. Saying 'An elephant is like this, an elephant is not like that!' they fought each other with their fists. And the king was delighted with the spectacle.¹

Museum public are more often than not in a situation similar to that of the blind. Firstly, the museum presents to their public something which to it, namely to its curators, seem obvious seemingly uninterpreted objects, material facts, equally objectively labelled on the display. Secondly, it is for the first time ever that the museum visitor sees the work on display (this is what he/she has come for to the museum); it is something they know nothing about. However, there may be a contrary situation: a visitor comes to the museum because he/she wants to face a fascinating object for an umpteenth time, knowing about it more than the curators. Thirdly, the museum ignores the interpretation of the first and the latter, assuming that it is the institution-depository of knowledge.

The parable of the blind can be read in at least two ways, the first claiming that none of the blind was right, since an elephant *is what everyone can see*. And an elephant is obviously neither like a water jar, winnowing basket, ploughshare, or a pole. The second that all the blind are right, or more strictly speaking: each blind is right to an extent, as he notices a peculiar complementary aspect of the reality.² The same can be said about museum visitors: each notices something different, each fails to notice something. Nobody is fully right, everyone is right only partially. The museum public, like the blind from the parable, undertake interpretative processes in the situation of cognitive insufficiency (in reality nobody can boast full knowledge of any topic); their judgements are not erroneous (in certain respects the elephant and that mysterious object are like a water jar, etc.), however simply not complete. The museum public (just like the parable's protagonists) carry out the acts of misreading.

It was Harold Bloom who introduced the concept of misreading; an outstanding theoretician of literature, he researched into the process of forming of the canon of Western culture. 'Misreading' does not imply an erroneous reading of the (meaning), but an un-reading of (the meaning) or 'not full reading' (of the meaning) or 'pre-reading' (of the meaning) of the interpreted text. Thus any interpretations is a misreading, namely pre-reading of the meaning. Since every interpretation is a creatively incorrect revision of the meaning given to the interpreted object by its author.

The measure of poets' grandeur (or using Bloom's language we should rather use the word 'power') is their capacity to free themselves from the canon's influence. Authors' literary struggles are both the empirical confirmation of the canon (after all the struggle for the independence of creativity confirms its existence), and its dialectical reconstruction (through misinterpretation). Powerful poets, and for Bloom the following are: Wallace Stevens, Thomas Hardy, Percy Bysshe Shelley, John Milton, William Butler Yeats, D.H. Lawrence, when creating, struggle against the sense of belatedness versus fully authentic and genuine achievements of pioneers, not simply trying to join them on the poetical Olympus, but to dethrone them.³

Bloom applies the theory of misreading exclusively to poetry. It is, however, one of the major works dedicated to canon-making, and out of necessity, to interpretation. Meanwhile, a museum institution, almost by definition, deals with canon-making, and out of necessity, with interpretation. Or what else can you call *collecting and preserving natural and cultural heritage of mankind, both tangible and*

*intangible, informing about the values and contents of its collections, diffusing the fundamental values of Polish and world history, science and culture, fostering cognitive and aesthetic sensitivity and providing access to the collected holdings.*⁴ Hence the very phenomenon of misreading: pre-reading does not just limit either to writing poetry or reading literature, and applies to using language in general. Each of us on a daily basis conducts acts of un-reading/pre-reading, only exceptionally calling them so.

Experiment 2

Let us imagine a queue to a newspaper stand, not necessarily a museum kiosk. Someone just standing in front of the assistant asks her: *Have you got the daily?* The assistant assumes that the question is not inspired by the client's care for the stocks, but it is a request for a paper (maybe this question should be written: *Have you got the 'Daily'?*). The question has been formulated in an abbreviated form, since the customer to be, just like any language user (and press user as well), aims at economizing time; additionally, he can feel the pressure of the line behind).

Thus the news agent hands the paper. Which one? This actually depending on the news stand location. After all, in Pomerania she/he would not even think of giving the 'Dziennik Łódzki', the daily of Lodz, but would know immediately that the daily in mind is the 'Dziennik Bałtycki', while in Cracow the obvious choice would be 'Dziennik Polski', and in Silesia it would be 'Dziennik Zachodni'. The news agent does it automatically, without giving a thought to misreading: pre-reading. He/she will do it out of habit, in the meantime actually conducting complex interpretation operations. Firstly, he or she will interpret the question as a request for a presupposed action. Secondly, they will interpret the actual daily's name as putative for the given region. In each case the decisive role will be played by the frequency of the to-date fortunate interpretations (in Pomerania the answer: *I'm sorry, but I haven't got the Dziennik Łódzki* would be equally absurd as the reply: *Yes, I still have 16 copies*). There exists no true (in the meaning: absolute, the only, reliable, universal) reply to the question: *Have you got the daily?* There only exist respective particular definite truths, always dependant on accidental contexts. As William James put it: *The truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it. Truth happens to an idea.*⁵

The blind from the Buddhist parable, knowing until now only definite elements of the reality: a water jar, winnowing basket, ploughshare, or a pole, have used their individual experience as the database for their pre-readings. These provided them with individual interpretative contexts putative for them, namely statistically most frequent, so far giving them fortunate results. The same can be said about each museum visitor. The process that a museum institution applies to every object is similar. The only difference being that a museum (with some exceptions only) acts like the ruler of Savatthi not admitting that in this epistemological duel involving interpretations it is subdued to the same rules as the public are; instead, it pretends that being an institution it has at its disposal material facts in the form of museum exhibits.

Meanwhile, material facts, pure physical data do not exist: they are always perceived with the eye that has been armed with pre-judgements beforehand. It is the interpreters that

create the interpreted object through a selection of features that undergo interpretation. As concluded by Stanley Fish, theoretician of interpretation (in the below quote I have only replaced the concept of 'text' with the concept of 'object': An apt reading of an object is generally regarded as identification of what is in the object, yet it is actually the matter of knowing what will be subsequently said that is found there. *Interpretation is not the art of construing but the art of constructing. Interpreters do not decode objects; they make them.*⁶

Every interpretation makes the object that is subjected to it. Similarly as every act of misreading: pre-reading makes the object that is subject to it. The conditioning factor is the context which is always accidental: the circumstances are always definite, and never universal.

Let us, however, return to the example given at the beginning of the paper: the museum public were selected to resemble the blind from the old Buddhist parable, so they had their knowledge of water jars, winnowing baskets, and ploughshares. Non-anecdotal public in a real Polish museum boasts much smaller expertise in old crafts. In a Polish museum it is far more likely for someone to claim at the sight of an object that a neighbour, a mate from the University of the Third Age, has something like that in her cottage garden. Or that something like this could be better made of Nether blocks in Minecraft (this being the version of an internet-hooked teenager). Or they might say that although they cannot see the object, the name as such sounds 'rusty and pointed', since they happen to be visually impaired. In every situation a different pre-reading occurs: each public member uses their respective putative interpretative context.

Interestingly, the perspective of misreading also spares the interpretation which is actually quite frequent that this object is a mere ****. As seen from my perspective of an educator dealing with modern and contemporary art in a museum, this is not an extremely extravagant example. The individual voicing such words conducts exactly the same operations; his or her pre-reading is conditioned by the accidental and putative context of the ritual of flexing their rhetorical muscles in front of the peer groups who appreciate provocation.

Empirical studies demonstrate that a person walking across a museum gallery carries out such acts of misreading almost instantly. In order to quote data respective of works of art let us say that the observation at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2001 demonstrated that the average time a visitor dedicated to an object amounted to 27.2 s, with the median time equalling 17 s (actually the same number of visitors paid their attention to an object for a longer time as those who dedicated less time to an object), with the dominant amounting to merely 10 s (namely, the most frequent observation time).⁷ The research repeated 15 years later gave similar results: 28.63 s – 21 s – 10 s respectively.⁸ The community inspiring the Day of Free Art Action aiming to change the superficial contact with the works claim that the contact time with an exhibit is merely 8 seconds.⁹ That moment, and certain statistics show that this contact can also be significantly shorter, has to suffice to analyse, interpret, and assess the object. And it does suffice. Among others because of the time economy (see the experiment with the daily) this analysis, interpretation, and evaluation is pre-reading.

Thus each time this 10-second pre-reading is different, conditioned by the otherness of a museum visitor who, being a real person, is never a 'statistical' visitor. It is impossible to find the average, find a median or a mode of the norm of a museum visitor. Who should such visitor be? Erving Goffman's 'Normals'? Young married white males living in a city, descending from the north of the USA, heterosexual Protestants parent with high education, full employment, a proper appearance, weight and height, who can boast recent sports accomplishments?¹⁰ Quite obviously this is a 'made in the USA' standard; and also more than half of the visitors are disqualified at the start (first of all, 'normals' cannot be women). Empirical studies conducted by Polish museological circles confirm that museum visitors are a varied community for whom no common denominator can be found. Even within a group that might appear more homogenous: e.g. senior citizens, there is a strong differentiation diversified by such factors as the domicile, education level, but mostly age.¹¹

Therefore, no museum object shall reveal its essential meaning to any museum visitor. Either within 10 seconds, or in the course of a long contemplation. This, however, does not imply that any museum visitor might be willing to interpret whatever object as ambiguous or meaningfully unstable. Contrariwise: since each of those individuals constitutes a 'norm' for themselves, they will judge that their misreading is valid. Each museum object in every of those accidental contexts has its unambiguous and permanent pre-reading; unambiguity and permanency do not refer in this respect to the essential properties of the object, but to how they appear to a particular interpreter in harmony with the assumptions he or she shares.

It is the context of interpretation that forces the meaning; a sentence has its sense defined by the situation in which it is pronounced, by the context, which is always accidental; the request for the circumstances to be of essential character, namely that they are always valid, is absurd. It seems, however, that the complex interpretative actions performed by museum institutions, due to their long lasting, meticulousness, expertise, etc., eliminated the contextual dependence of ascertainment. Meanwhile, it is simply the fact that this museum paradigm has been naturalized to such a degree that the *meanings they legislate seem 'natural' and a special effort is needed to notice that they are a product of the circumstances*. Therefore certain particular pre-readings of an object are received as 'literal', 'objective', or 'natural'; and this done instinctively, automatically, and instantaneously: this is connected with their 'institutional nesting' at the key point in the network of knowledge distribution¹² that a museum is, next to e.g., other institutions of culture, education, and higher education.

Let us resume in our imagination the experiment with the public viewing a museum object. Wandering through the museum display ceases being a trifling stroll: instead, it becomes a hard negotiation of the cultural canon between the powerful museum voice (here the patriarchal metaphor is entirely appropriate: the museum is the father figure, male subject from the universe of a cultural canon) and the voice of the female visitor fighting for her independence. The Horatian interpretations on the bronze walls of the institution hide their contextual conditionings to a mother behind

a pushchair who due to the fact that her one-year-old baby daughter is teething admonishes herself for being able to afford a moment only (10 seconds) to stop before an exhibit. Meanwhile, her pre-readings have the same theoretical justification as curators' captions on the wall. In the below quote from Bloom I have replaced the word 'text' with the word 'object': (...) *let us compare two formulas: You become what you read, and You can read only what you are. The first formula gives the priority to every object over every reader, the second, gives every reader his/her own object. It is in the mutual interaction of the two formulas that the intricacies of creating a canon are revealed, since both formulas are equally true.*¹³

I propose such a point of view in which the museum institution is Bloom's powerful poet hewing the Canon, which is the most extreme version of what [Friedrich] Nietzsche called *Interpretation or the practicing of the Will for Power*,¹⁴ the imposing of one's own point of view, the idea of one's own pre-reading.

Experiment 3

Let us imagine a museum object which is entirely 'innocent', not burdened with any interpretation. Successfully? I doubt it. In a museum institution there remains no object that has been uninterpreted. It becomes pre-read by being included in the register of a definite museum, by being incorporated in a definite collection, by being displayed in a definite exhibition, in the vicinity of definite objects, through a definite curator's description, etc. Each time this interpretation creates an illusion of its own exclusivity and completeness: most usually a museum builds it meticulously. At the same time, pre-reading which Bloom calls for, though obviously this call is as methodological as it is ethical, *cannot deny its partiality and the inevitable falsification.*¹⁵ At least it should not. This, however, hardly any museum does.

Since a museum institution would have to admit before the public that it essentially has no access to the object's meaning. Meanwhile, and let us once more paraphrase Bloom's words in which the word 'text' has been supplanted with an 'object': an empirical thinker confronted with the object searches for meaning. An internal voice tells the thinker: if this is a complete and independent object, it has a meaning. The only trouble being that this seemingly common-sense assumption is not true. Objects do not have meanings, except for relations with other actors of the meaning-creating network, namely other objects, individuals, texts, etc. According to Bloom, *an object is a relational event, not a substance for analysis.*¹⁶ Interpretation is a game between empirical reification and dialectical irony which suggests that in view of the objects we interpret (equally in a museum and in poetry), we sustain certain illusionary convictions. The common-sense judgements on poetry nature are nurtured, according to Bloom, by at least four illusions. They are as follows: 1. religious illusion claiming that a poem has or creates real presence; 2. organic illusion assuming that a poem possesses or creates a kind of unity; 3. rhetorical illusion with the belief that a poem has or creates a certain form; 4. metaphysical illusion expressed in the belief that the poem has or creates a definite meaning. According to Bloom, the sad truth is that a poem neither has

or creates a presence, unity, form or meaning.¹⁷ I am of the opinion that these observations of Bloom can successfully be applied to the nature of museum objects; they do not feature essential presence, unity, form, and meaning either.

'The presence' of something or someone evoked by an object is the matter of the belief of the interpreters. It is a promise, a part of substance of things that are hoped for, but which remain persistently invisible. The belief in the presence is expressed in museums in the form of objects-relics, sentimental mementoes that make the public believe that here the pen of a writer, the desk of an inventor, the manor of the Marshal, or *The Holy Father's Skis* from Jerzy Pilch's play, resuscitate somebody's spirit, or are almost 'sanctified' by somebody's presence.

The 'unity' of the object is a mistake, or even a lie as Bloom claims, since it exists only in the interpreter's (good) will. The museum decontextualization isolates the object from its author, owner, user, from other objects similar within the same class, series, function, creation date, predecessors and followers, in other words, it pulls it out of its proper culture. The classical example of the unity illusion can be found in an ethnographic display exoticizing the objects. The object's 'form' is a metaphor conditioned by the post-Cartesian dualism of the West. After all, the 'form' objectivising the object always depends on the putative cognitive perspective which, in line with the shared methodology, always meticulously overlooks those object's elements which do not fit the assumption made beforehand. Just to give two extreme examples: the object's form can result from the analytical emphasis on the unity (structuralism) or on the tensions and defaults perceived in the alleged and, as such, unjustly underestimated marginalia (deconstructivism as interpretative strategy).

The object's 'meaning' is the matter of metaphysics. Interpreting the object, its misreading: pre-reading is the inscribing: interpreting into it the sphere of values.¹⁸ The putative, accidental context of each misreading act reveals at the same time individual values of the interpreter. Discovering certain features in the object means the use of the object to fulfil the system of individual needs: *biological, material, psychological, experiential* of a private economy or respective individuals who have an impact on the economics of the value market as producers, distributors, and consumers.¹⁹

Experiment 4

Let us assume that I collect bronze Art Déco figurines. Accidental circumstances, draught to be precise, create the need to press papers on the desk. Then, pre-reading, I revise the object's value in order to extract certain potential qualities of the *female gymnast* (namely its mass) and potential figurine's functions (paperweight), utterly ignoring its other values (e.g. hedonistic or economic). This accidentally and diametrically alters the *gymnast's* classification, as well as its value.

The fact that the gymnast from the mental experiment will be valued in the antique market as an object of aesthetic values proves not only silent assumptions on model perception and competition conditions (expertise in Art Déco with parallel lack of draughts). It also testifies to

a diligent depreciation of an accidental context, interests, purposes, and ego of the precepting individual, creating out of an ideal critic of aesthetical axiology a construct equivalent of a Model Reader in hermeneutics. As observed by Barbara Herrnstein Smith, an aesthetician and philosopher, the allegedly common-sense attributing of aesthetical values to the figurine of the gymnast, or to any other 'antique', reverses the relation between classification and function, which is perfectly shown *in the dictionary definition of an 'antique' as an artistic object, a knick-knack, etc. appreciated for its 'antiquity', this obviously resembling the definition of a clock as an 'object valued as a clock', and equally just.*²⁰ Meanwhile, let me reiterate that there exists no permanent context conditioning the worth of objects, e.g. figurines or clocks. What is key for valuing is classification, distinguishing the object's potential functions, and attributing them respective values. Any value is radically accidental.

And if the judgements of some individuals on the values display a certain community coincidence, this does not mean an essential nesting of those features in the interpreted object, but more the fact that particular needs of the community members have been regulated culturally and remain relatively resistant to the changeability of an accidental context, due to which they will look so obvious and natural to those community members that they will not seem the matter of taste to them. Even what are considered facts are interpretations of objects inscribing values in them: putative to the interpreters with a Positivist background. Since indeed, the empiricist division between a fact and a value tastes not so much of professionalism, as of intellectual patronizing of 'objective scientists' versus publicists.

The decision to present an object in a museum is never 'innocent'. There can be many reasons for that, however even their brief list displays that it does not depend at all whether the object is valuable or worthless. If valuable, then for what reason? Valuable as an object on a definite educational path? Valuable as an illustration of certain topics or techniques that a curator wants to emphasize? Valuable since the museum has many gadgets with its reproduction in stock? Valuable, since knowledge of this object is a part of basic education? Valuable, since the museum has thoroughly studied the object, and can now use already prepared essays in the exhibition catalogue?²¹ Each time the object is something different and boasts a different value. The value is never created by essential presence, unity, form, or meaning. The value is a deal concluded between the museum institution and a visitor. A transaction that takes into account mechanisms of production, reproduction, and transfer of the values of the object, such as e.g. acquisition, preservation, display, studying, disseminating, educating, reproducing, echoing, alluding, imitation, as well as printing reviews and their revision, awarding, commissioning, and publishing of academic papers, writing prefaces, compiling anthologies, working out curricula.²² All these are accidental, transactional values which a museum (most frequently) presents as generally valid.

Meanwhile, each evaluating boasts at most an informative function. The object: pre-read at a museum exhibition, informs on the issues that go far beyond it; it speaks of the museum, the collection, the curator. And more sincerely: it speaks of the institution's ideological conditionings: racial, class, economic, social, gender, etc. Since it informs on the

discovered usefulness in the object in the function assumed as evident for a definite though implied museum object in definite, though implied conditions, in relation to other objects that rank among the same implied category.²³

However, a museum, just like every powerful poet, meticulously hides those interpretative dependences. The interpreted object by definition has to be pre-read. The point is, though, that a powerful interpretation is not shaded, that the object can mean this, but also that. There exists no that. According to a powerful interpretation, the interpretation and the object are the same thing.²⁴

The paradox consists in the fact that the interpretative explicitness always occurs at the expense of the distortion of the sense: the 'erroneous' pre-reading. Besides, the more important the object is, the more 'powerfully' it is set in the tradition, the more scandalous the 'errors' will become. Additionally: the more 'powerful' the interpretation, the more strongly it releases subsequent 'erroneous' pre-readings. Bloom even ventures to formulate such a law that widely acknowledges interpretations of the works of the most powerful poets, which must essentially be an entire contradiction to what their poems truly are (or were intended to be).²⁵ Since powerful poems are that ones which provoke truly powerful misreadings.

The same applies to museum objects: a powerful museum interpretation, concealing its own accidentality, presenting itself as final, provokes powerful revisions. That is why chefs-d'œuvre, time after time, return to display spaces and museum catalogues, revised as for their meaning in subsequent, always changeable, accidental contexts. It is precisely this recirculation of objects of key importance for the museum that constitutes the proof, and mask, of the reiterated reinterpretative actions. Quite simply because in those pre-reading acts of its objects, the museum does not differ from its public for whom misreadings are equally accidental (and who knows, maybe this is where the need to revisit the same museum on several occasions, view the same exhibition, experience the same object stems from). Speaking metaphorically, here too, following Bloom, the meaning of a museum object is only another object: the one differently pre-read. In reality, it is the very otherness of that other object.²⁶

To sum up, one could ask how the museum manages to institutionally suggest levelling the meaning of its own ascertainment with ten-second visitor's interpretations: is equalling the same as equal-value misreadings? Two strategies come to my mind (though I doubt if they can exhaust the list of potential solutions). The first: to introduce into exhibition space the same objects and literally reveal the working over of the research into them. Then the very rhetoric of the display will be an invitation to reiterate interpretation. The second: to include in the exhibition the contents 'borrowed' from everyday life of the museum visitors: everyday objects, clothes, utensils, but also media messages, legal regulations, customs that are not musemified by having been included in the register. In an obvious way they will become carriers of the beyond-museum context – the putative character of their misreadings, de-automated through an unusual presentation space will reveal the very mechanism of recontextualization: daily life will become the reference horizon for the interpreting of the 'proper' exhibits.

Abstract: Resorting to the arguments of the theory of the interpretation of culture texts, particularly Harold Bloom's concept of misreading, the power of interpretative ascertainment achieved by the museum public and the museum institution is equalled. Relating the literature theories to the museum realm, the Author discloses the

contingency (namely the conditioning always dependent on the context) of the interpretative activity in a museum institution. In a series of four intellectual experiments the interpretative instability of a museum object is approximated, while its possible consequences for a museum institution are pointed to.

Keywords: New Museology, object, interpretation, misreading, value.

Endnotes

- ¹ See: <https://buddhismnow.com/2018/02/16/tittha-sutta-buddhist-parable-of-the-blind-men-and-the-elephant/> [Accessed: 19 Oct 2020]
- ² The philosophy of ancient India absorbed this multi-aspect character as the Jain concept of *Anekantavada*: it is an idea of metaphysical and cognitive many-sidedness, which translates into non-harming, see P. Balcerowicz, *Dżinizm i filozofia dżinijska* [Jainism and Jain Philosophy], in: *Filozofia Wschodu* [Philosophy of the Orient], B. Szymańska (ed.), Wydawnictwo UJ, Kraków 2001, pp. 155-177.
- ³ Bloom developed this somewhat Oedipal and full of cabalistic references theory in his subsequent works: *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973; in Polish as *Lęk przed wpływem. Teoria poezji*, A. Bielik-Robson, M. Szuster (transl.), Universitas, Kraków 2002; *A Map of Misreading* (1975); *Kabbalah and Criticism* (1975); *Poetry and Repression* (1975). The theoretician summed them up and revised in the paper *The Necessity of Misreading*, 'The Georgia Review' Winter 2001/Spring 2002, vol. 55/56, no. 4 / vol. 56, no. 1, pp. 68-87.
- ⁴ Act on Museums of 21 Nov 1996, Art.1.1., (Journal of Laws of 1997, No 5, Item 24; The English version at <https://www.eui.eu/Projects/InternationalArtHeritageLaw/Documents/NationalLegislation/Poland/museumsact1996.pdf> transl. by Dorota Bartz [Accessed: 19 Oct 2020].
- ⁵ W. James, *Pragmatyzm. Nowa nazwa kilku starych metod myślenia. Popularne wykłady z filozofii* [Pragmatism, a New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking. Popular Lectures on Philosophy], M. Filipczuk (transl. into Polish), P. Gutowski (Afterword), Kraków 2004, p. 88. The English quote at: <http://web.mnstate.edu/gracyk/courses/web%20publishing/JamesPragmatismVI.htm> [Accessed: 19 Oct 2020].
- ⁶ This is excellently exposed in the famous experiment conducted by Stanley Fish which stretches the understanding of Bloom's misreading onto any interpretative action: the experiment consisting in giving students dealing with 17th-century English religious poetry a list of name of linguists: 'Jacobs-Rosenbaum – Levin – Thorne – Hayes – Ohman (?)'; the students effectively conducted the misreading of the list of names as mystical lyrics, thus refuting the necessity to conduct the structuralist procedure of passing from the text features to its sense; instead, they followed the algorithm: if you have a poem, do this and that. What proved primordial was the context which conditioned the classification. See S. Fish, *Jak rozpoznać wiersz, gdy się go widzi* [How to Recognize a Poem When You See One], A. Grzeliński (transl. into Polish), A. Szahaj (ed. of the transl.), in: S. Fish, *Interpretacja, retoryka, polityka. Eseje wybrane* [Interpretation, Rhetoric, Politics. Selected Essays], A. Szahaj (ed.), Kraków 2002, pp. 81-86. English quote at <https://www.shmoop.com/reader-response-theory/stanley-fish-quotes.html> [Accessed: 19 Oct 1990]. I presented an ample report on the debate on interpretation in the paper L. Karczewski, *Interpretacja versus użycie albo śrubokręt w badaniach literackich* [Interpretation versus Usage, or a Screwdriver in Literary Research], in: *Awangardowa encyklopedia, czyli Słownik rozmawiany nauk, sztuk i rzemiosł różnych. Prace ofiarowane Profesorowi Grzegorzowi Gaździe* [Avant-Garde Encyclopaedia, Namely a Reasoned Dictionary of Sciences, Arts, and Varied Crafts. Works Presented to Prof. Grzegorz Gaźda], I. Hubner, A. Izdebska, J. Płuciennik, D. Szajnert (ed.), Wydawnictwo UŁ, Łódź 2008, pp. 155-169.
- ⁷ See J.K. Smith, L.F. Smith, *Spending Time on Art*, in: 'Empirical Studies of the Arts' 2001, No. 9, pp. 229-236.
- ⁸ See J.K. Smith, L.F. Smith, P.P.L. Tinio, *Time spent viewing art and reading labels*, in: 'Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts' 2017, No. 11, pp. 77-85.
- ⁹ See <http://dzienwolnej sztuki.pl/o-akcji/> [Accessed: 9 Sept 2020].
- ¹⁰ E. Goffman, *Piętno. Rozważania o zranionej tożsamości* [Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity], A. Dzierżyńska, J. Tokarska-Bakir (transl. into Polish), J. Tokarska-Bakir (Introduction to the Polish edition), Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, Gdańsk 2005, p. 171.
- ¹¹ See P.T. Kwiatkowski and B. Nessel-Łukasik, *Seniorzy w Muzeum. Raport* [Senior Citizens in Museums. Reports], J. Grzonkowska (Project Coordinator), NIMOZ, Warszawa 2019. *I write about the heterogenous community of museum senior citizens also in Gerontogogika muzealna. Wstępne intuicje* [Museum Gerontogogics. Initial Intuitions], in: *ABC Muzeum dla seniorów* [ABC. A Museum for Senior Citizens], B. Nessel-Łukasik (ed.), NIMOZ, Warszawa 2020, pp. 34-45.
- ¹² See S. Fish, *Zwyczajne okoliczności, język dosłowny, bezpośrednie akty mowy, to, co normalne, oczywiste, zrozumiałe samo przez się i inne szczególnie przypadki* [Normal Circumstances, Literal Language, Direct Speech Acts, the Ordinary, the Everyday, the Obvious, What Goes without Saying, and Other Special Cases] M. Smoczyński (transl. into Polish), A. Szahaj (ed. of the translation), in: S. Fish, *Interpretacja, retoryka...*, pp. 51-57.
- ¹³ H. Bloom, *The Necessity...*, p. 70.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 71.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 70.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 75.
- ¹⁷ See *Ibid.*, pp. 84-85.
- ¹⁸ See *Ibid.*, p. 80.
- ¹⁹ See B. Herrnstein Smith, *Uwarunkowania wartości* [Contingencies of Value], M.B. Fedewicz (transl. into Polish), in: 'Pamiętnik Literacki' 1985, z./fasc. 4, pp. 318-319.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 320-321.
- ²¹ *I paraphrase here the entry Barbara Herrnstein Smith*, in: *The Northon Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, General Editor V.B. Leitch, W.W. Norton & Company, New York, London 2001, p. 1911.

²² See B. Herrnstein Smith, *Uwarunkowania...*, pp. 314, 334-337.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 329-330.

²⁴ H. Bloom, *The Necessity...*, p. 87.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

²⁶ See *Ibid.*, p. 77.

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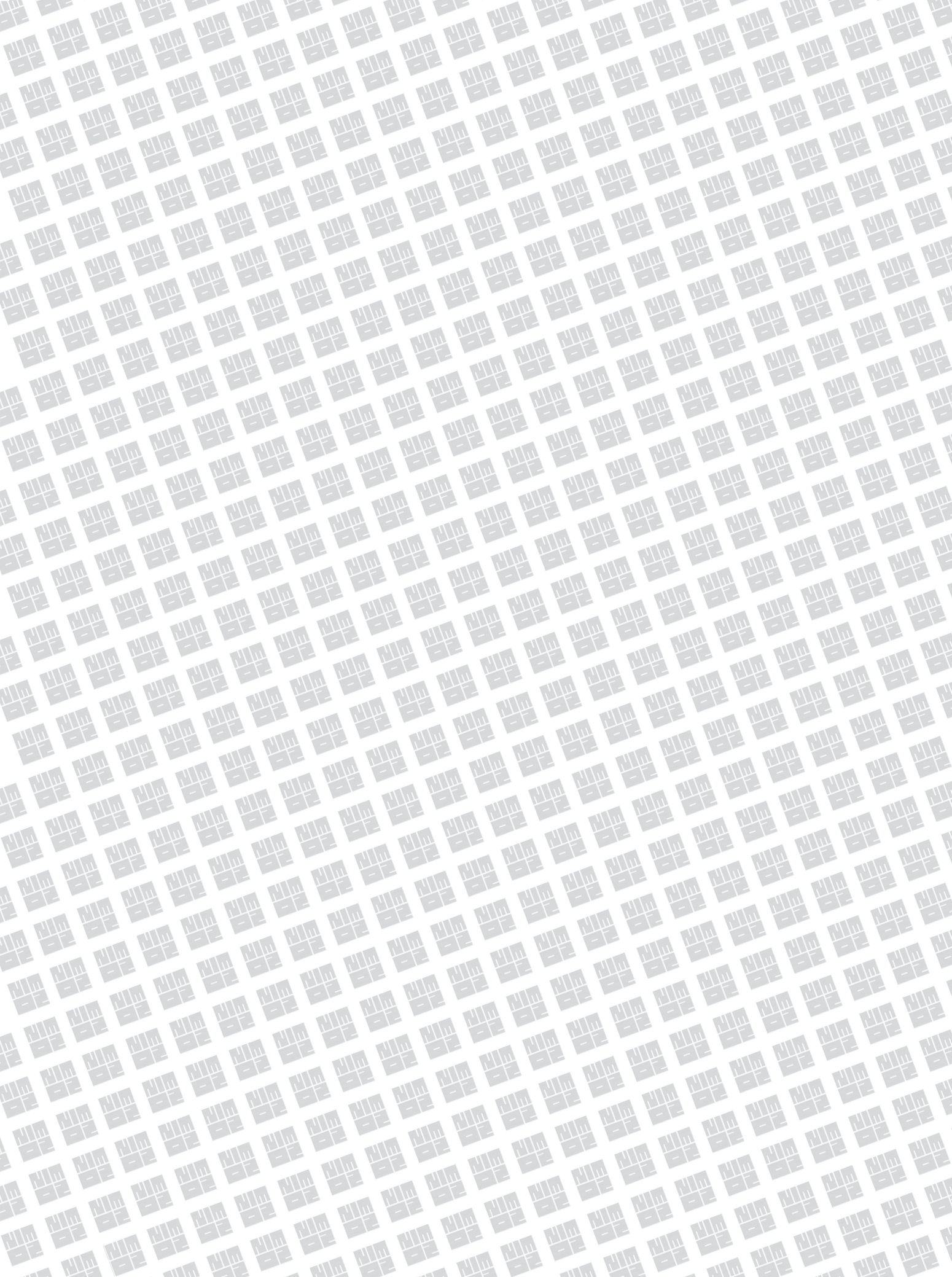


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MUSEUM IN MEMORY CULTURE

Piotr Majewski

Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw

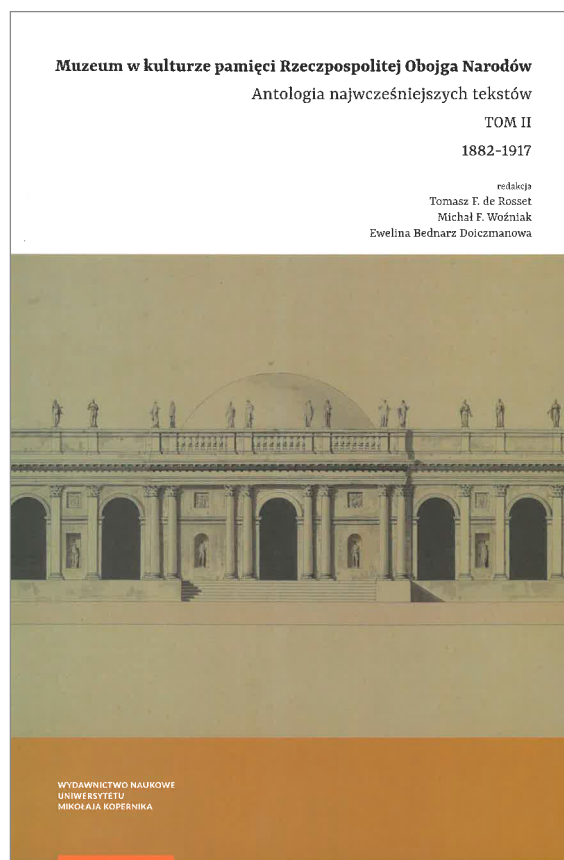
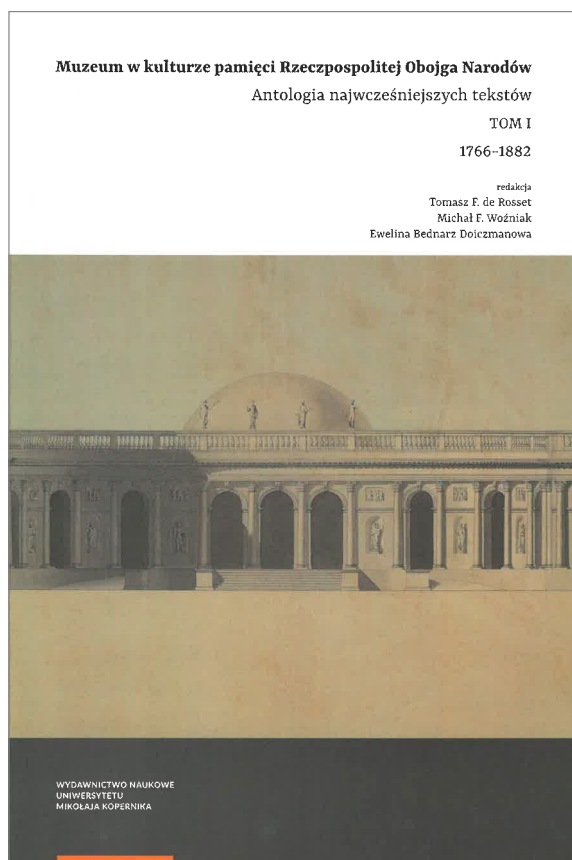
Muzeum w kulturze pamięci Rzeczypospolitej Obojga Narodów. Antologia najwcześniejszych tekstów [Museum in Memory Culture of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Anthology of the Earliest Texts], eds. Tomasz F. de Rosset, Michał F. Woźniak, Ewelina Bednarz Doiczmanowa, Vol. 1: 1766–1882, pp. 340, Vol. 2: 1882–1917, pp. 369, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, Toruń 2020

The discussed anthology of texts was created as a part of the *Museum in Polish Memory Culture (until 1918): Early Museum Institutions versus Digital Museology Programme*, one of the more inspiring research programmes dedicated to museology and implemented recently in Poland (National Programme for the Development of Humanities). The Programme in question actually covers approaches characteristic of several disciplines included in humanities: history, art-related disciplines, or those connected with culture and religion. This interdisciplinary character corresponds with the research tradition of the former Museology Unit at the Faculty of Fine Arts, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń; both the Project and the discussed publication form a worthy continuation of this tradition.

The major quality of the publication is its source-providing quality, since it is impossible to imagine humanistic reflection without resorting to sources, formulation of the synthesis of the history of Polish museology and responding to continuously topical questions posed in the era of defining the Positivist research tools without resorting to sources; in their majority actually the sources known to historiographers, though only from fragmentary quotes, secondary discussions, or copied interpretations. Source studies and the provision of their results in the form of an anthology allows the oncoming generations of researches into the past, particularly those interested in museum operations within Poland's territory, to perceive museum history anew, formulate their own evaluations, conduct their historiographic and historiosophic investigation, or finally, this being of particular importance in contemporary museological operations, commit a frequent error of regarding currently formulated theses as intellectually innovatory. The reviewed publication constitutes a source of extensive knowledge, while its reading can make us feel really humble *versus* the Past.

The texts that compose the anthology render the reality of museology within the territories of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: museology not necessarily connected with the Polish ethnos and ethos, since also the sources related to museum projects implemented under the auspices of the partitioning powers or created by Lithuanian or Ukrainian circles: as an emanation of parallel independence aspirations, sometimes even competitive with Polishness, are provided. The source materials contained in the anthology form an almost complete image of Polish museology, operating either contrary to or beyond the agency of state authorities not regarded by Poles as their own; museology (and collecting forming its primordial form) based on the activity of private individuals and societies as well as scientific circles; museology which despite unfavourable political conditions shaped its organizational and legal models securing long lasting to the collections (e.g., the legal format of an entail); museology, which although delayed versus the European museological reflection, skilfully implemented its practical solutions, to mention only the expansion of local or tourism museology or the visions of a modern cultural institution: museum, formulated at the threshold of Poland's independence by Mieczysław Treter.

The variety of the recalled sources, their genre diversity, different literary attributes, form the logics of cause-and-effect relations, determinants and contexts, whose continuation can be observed in the contemporary museological discourse, not always conducted with the awareness of the pre-sources. Within the range of this timeless reflection we can find, for example, terminological considerations dedicated to the museum concept, its changes throughout the 19th century, emphasizing to either different or temporarily altering degree the collecting, educational, and scientific-research responsibilities, commemorating the national and local past, therefore close to memory policy contemporarily defined and practiced.



An innovative quality of an anthology usually stems from the fact that it is the first compilation of source texts representative of the era in which they were produced. However, although the majority of the writings included in the discussed anthology have been published before, such a comprehensive approach favouring a synthetic one, is provided to readers for the first time.

To conclude, we cannot help suggesting that the discussed

anthology should find practical application in scholarly centres and cultural institutions dealing with research into cultural heritage and managing culture from a historical perspective; it should also form part of the readings advisable as part of the canon of museology and akin disciplines. (<https://nimosz.pl/baza-wiedzy/bazy-danych/baza-studiow-dla-muzealnioskow/studia-w-polsce> [Accessed: 17 January 2022]).

Abstract: The revised publication *Muzeum w kulturze pamięci Rzeczypospolitej Obojga Narodów. Antologia najwcześniejszych tekstów* [Museum in Memory Culture of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Anthology of the Earliest Texts], Vol. 1: 1766–1882, Vol. 2: 1882–1917, eds. Tomasz F. de Rosset, Michał F. Woźniak, Ewelina Bednarz Doiczmanowa, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, Toruń 2020, prepared as part of the

research project financed with a grant from the National Programme for the Development of Humanities, constitutes a valuable example of primary source analyses which form grounds for the reflection on the history of Polish museology, particularly during Poland's partitions, consistently leading to its synthesis. The publication is a precious reading supporting the research programme and the curriculum in disciplines related to museology and preservation of cultural heritage.

Keywords: heritage, museum, culture, memory, independence.

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In 1995–2009, he worked at the Royal Castle in Warsaw. Since 2011 he has co-created the concept of the National Institute for Museums and Public Collections (NIMOSZ), and has served as the Editor-in-Chief of the 'Museology' Annual. He is interested in the management of cultural institutions as seen from a historical perspective and involving the category of memory policy. He has published e.g., *Czas końca, czas początku. Architektura i urbanistyka Warszawy historycznej*

1939–1956 [Time of the End, Time of the Beginning. Architecture and Urban Layout of Historic Warsaw] (2018); *Muzealna twarz Klio (wybór tekstów z lat 1999–2019)* [Museum Facet of Clío (Selection of Texts from 1999–2019)] (2020); e-mail: p.majewski@uksw.edu.pl.

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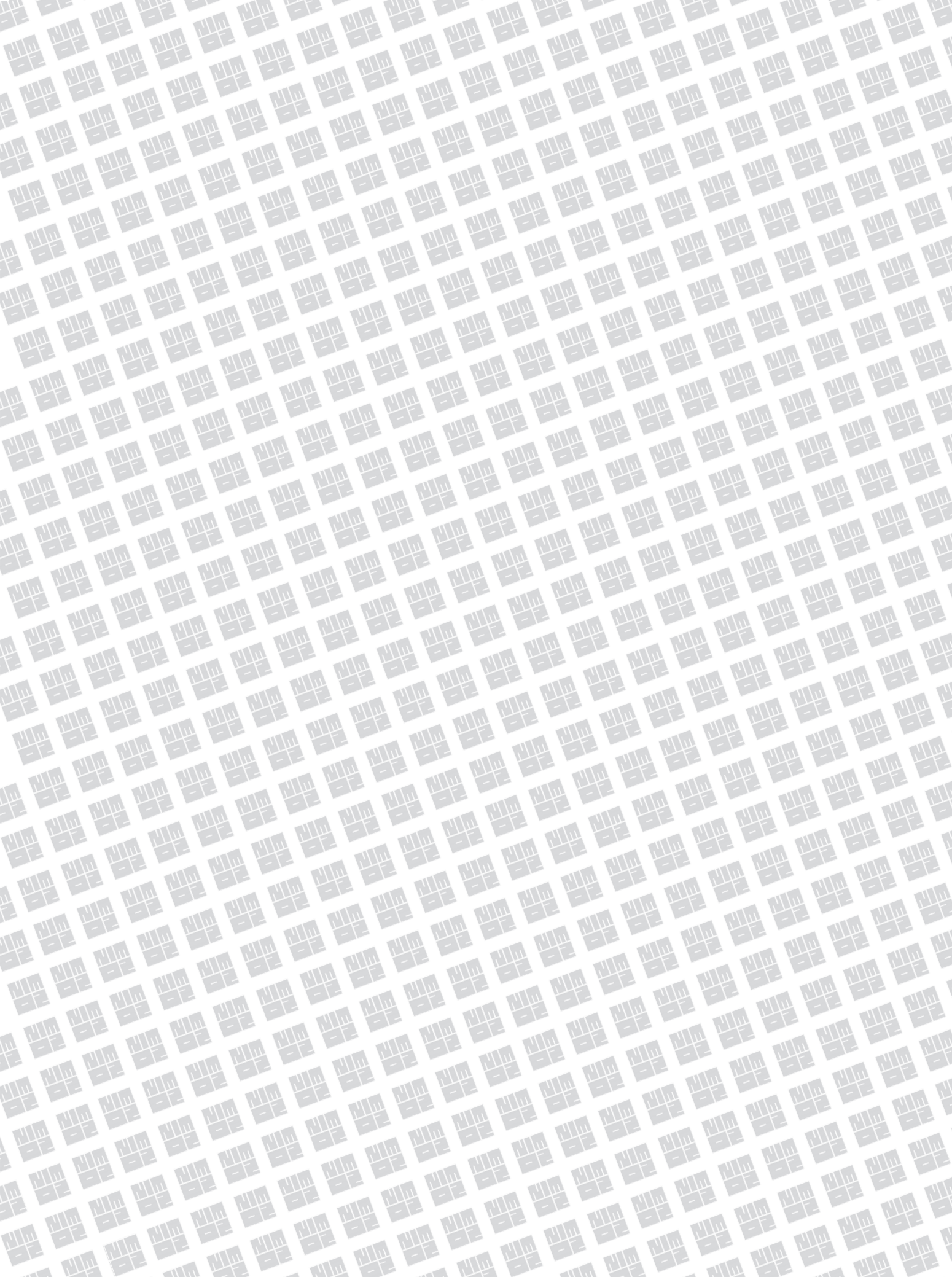


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